

SOVIET LITERATURE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

LEV KASSIL

EARLY DAWN



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A STORY
ABOUT A YOUNG ARTIST



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This book is illustrated with reproductions of drawings and paintings
by Kolya Dmitriev

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**Paint landscapes with wind and water,
with sunrise and sunset.**

Leonardo da Vinci

A U T H O R ' S P R E F A C E

oon after I began to write this book, there appeared in the Moscow journal, *Soviet Art*, dated May 16th, 1950, a letter signed by a number of prominent personalities in the Soviet world of art and letters. It called attention to the growing tribute which was being paid by the Soviet public and workers in all spheres of art to the work of Kolya Dmitriev, a fifteen-year-old boy artist.

“Exhibitions in Moscow art salons of the works of this extremely gifted and prolific young artist,” ran the letter, “as well as reproductions of his drawings in various magazines, have evoked lively interest, general admiration, and recognition by the most exacting art devotees. A glance at the recorded impressions of visitors to these exhibitions will confirm that Soviet men of culture—among them noted painters—as well as college students, army men, factory workers, teachers, school children, are of one mind about the work of Kolya Dmitriev. All of them express the highest admiration for his striking talent, and pride in the country which could produce such talent.

“The works of the fifteen-year-old boy, only just set out on his artist’s career, show that he followed the best traditions of the great Russian painters—notably V. Serov. The distinguishing traits of Dmitriev’s youthful but colossal talent are vitality, an appealing softness of colour tints, vigorous and precise draughtsmanship, keen powers

of observation, love for the beautiful nature of his native land, flawless taste, and an artistic boldness, which leads to far-reaching discoveries. Combined with these qualities is a tremendous will to work, to study, to improve himself . . .

"We regard the work of Kolya Dmitriev," the letter goes on, "as yet another great example of the vivid young talent in which our country is so rich."

The letter ends with a suggestion to publish an account of Kolya Dmitriev's life and work.

This appeal coming from a group of eminent men of culture confirmed my own feeling as to the timeliness of a book about this boy artist. I had then been writing it for some time, completely carried away by what I had seen of Kolya Dmitriev's painting, read in his diaries and heard from those who knew him.

My book is based upon the true story of Kolya Dmitriev's life. I have made use of factual material—letters, documents and diaries—and have followed the train of events and important dates which mark the life of the young artist. Yet I have reserved for myself that liberty which is essential to the creative artist. I felt that certain events and situations called for enhancement and development. I considered it necessary to change the true names of some of the characters and to introduce a few typified figures for the sake of unity and integrity in the narrative. The complementary material which led me to my generalizations and conjectures was based on extensive data readily supplied by Kolya Dmitriev's relations, teachers and friends, for which I wish here to express to them my deepest thanks.

PART



ONE

Life, life, capture life and develop your imagination! These are essential . . .

I. REPIN

The power of my childish impressions and the observations stored up in early life, make up, if I may say so, the main resource of my talent.

P. FEDOTOV





Chapter 1
A DISCOVERY



Early in the morning, when it was still misty, the train pulled up at a station . . .

Kolya began his story, then stopped abruptly. His eyes were on the ground. There, in the sand, as he always did, he had drawn a picture with a twig to illustrate his story, and he stopped short, fascinated by what had taken shape under his hand. It seemed a miracle. He screwed up his eyes, and, seeing him do this, Katya, his little sister, screwed up her eyes too, creasing her round chubby face.

This was a game she had learned from Kolya: you screwed up your eyes as tightly as you could, then you opened them quickly—and the world was a strange, unfamiliar place with all the colours altered. You could play the same game with your ears by pressing your hands tightly over them and quickly removing them. Everything fell into a deep hush, as if the air were lined with cotton-wool, then suddenly came alive again with clear sounds, shedding a sort of wrapping which they had had a moment ago.

With her eyes tightly shut, Katya waited for her brother to open his and exclaim, as he always did: "I see everything yellow!" To which she would at once cry out: "And I see

everything ever so yellow!" This time, however, Kolya said not a word. Warily Katya opened the corner of one eye and saw her brother rubbing out with his foot the lines he had traced in the sand. He seemed perplexed and preoccupied with something. He looked at the ground, frowning and blinking; then his glance wandered round the familiar yard, before resting absently, first on his little sister, and then on Zhenya Striganov sitting astride the bench beside him.

"Go on with the story," Zhenya urged.

Kolya did not seem to hear him, but went on blinking, his deep-blue eyes moving from his friend to the house, then again round the yard and back to the sand, where he felt he was getting the answer to some riddle . . .

But was he, really? What if he were merely deluding himself? Kolya looked round the yard again. Everything seemed real enough. There was the tall oak-tree stretching a shaggy green branch protectingly above their heads from across the low fence which separated the yard of his home, Number 10, Plotnikov Street, from that of the house next door. The children of the two adjoining houses in Plotnikov Street shared the shade and acorns of the oak-tree. The din from busy Arbat Street filtered into their quiet side-street—everything was exactly as it had been before. He had made what a minute ago he had thought to be an astounding discovery. Now he wondered if it had been merely a trick of the imagination.

But he had to go on with the story. Zhenya Striganov was not one to be trifled with—he was a recognized leader among the boys in the yard, if not in the whole block. And Zhenya Striganov was beginning to look with mistrust at Kolya, who was the younger of the two. Zhenya's ginger hair was stiff and frizzy, giving the impression of a tangle of red spirals charged

with electric current. Despite the two years' difference in their age they were close chums, Zhenya acting as Kolya's protector. He liked to listen to the thrilling stories of which the younger boy had an inexhaustible store.

Zhenya came of a hard-working family and knew the worth of things, sizing up people by the way they were shod. This may have had something to do with the fact that Zhenya's father, Stepan Porfiryevich Striganov, a curly-headed giant of a carpenter, had gone barefoot for half his life. This was in the old time when bast shoes were worn not every day but on special occasions only. Zhenya had on sturdy walking-shoes and was not in the least envious of Kolya's fancy summer shoes—the many holes, thought Zhenya, really spoiled their look. But when a fellow went about in genuine leather shoes, it meant that his folks had good standing. Besides, the fearless, kind-hearted little chap, with the fair tuft of hair on the crown of his head, could tell the most wonderful stories about pilots, frontier guards and sailors—and he drew pictures to illustrate them. If there happened to be a sheet of paper handy, he would draw in pencil, if not, a twig on sand would do; if there was a bit of chalk, he would make pictures on the pavement—he would even sketch on the wall with a lump of coal.

But today, Kolya could not get on with his story.

"Go on!" urged Zhenya. "The train pulled up at a station and then what?"

"All change for Sham Station, it's a lot of bosh," came from across the fence.

That meant that Victor Lanevsky (nicknamed "Castor Oil"), who was the two boys' greatest enemy, had been listening all the time under the oak. He was peeping through a chink in the fence, ready to make fun of them and eager for mischief.

"See!" Zhenya lowered his voice. "He thinks he's one up, but never mind him—go on with the story."

"Early in the morning, when it was still misty, the train pulled up at a station right on the frontier," Kolya resumed his story, raising his voice, apparently, for the benefit of the boy on the other side of the fence. "It was an armoured train, of course. Along with the frontier guards I jumped off while the train was still moving. Everything was very quiet..."

"Then all of a sudden I woke up!" came from over the fence. Zhenya spat in annoyance.

"You mean *you* woke up, not I, for I wasn't a bit asleep," Kolya couldn't help shouting back.

"So you weren't asleep? And you weren't dreaming it all?" sneered the boy from the next yard.

"I wasn't!" Kolya said hotly and strode up to the fence. "You've guessed all wrong—I didn't dream it!"

"Well, if you didn't, where did you fish up the story?"

With his eyes on the fence, Kolya said distinctly: "I thought it all up, on my honour I did."

"Of course, he made it all up, stupid!" Katya confirmed.

For a long time now Kolya had been making up stories about all kinds of journeys and voyages. At home they called these stories "thought-ups." Mother called them that, and she listened to them with no less interest than did Katya and Zhenya. Kolya, as he told his tales, drew with coloured pencils tiny pictures, no bigger than postage stamps, because he wanted to see with his own eyes the things he thought up.

Katya, who was orderly, collected her brother's pictures in a box. Tiny as they were, these drawings showed fantastic trees with leaves the size of houses, seas as green as any cabbage patch, and a sun, frizzy and red like Zhenya's hair.

And today, when Kolya, beginning one of his "thought-ups" about a train arriving on a misty morning at a station, was outlining the railway tracks with a stick on the sand, it seemed as if a miracle had happened. Here was the solution of something which had for long been a riddle to him. The answer was there in the sand, in the drawing: a discovery so staggering that he hastily rubbed out with the toe of his shoe what he had drawn.

He was in no mood for going on with his story. He wanted to run home, to be by himself, to see if he could repeat the discovery on paper. And he was glad when Mother opened the window and called to him. Zhenya said glumly: "You better go. It's your music."

Kolya knew he wouldn't be allowed to sit and draw just then. Six months ago it had been discovered that he had "perfect pitch," as a music teacher friend claimed, and he had gone with Mother to take the entrance examination at the district music school. There everyone was favourably impressed by the slender little chap with fair eyebrows and blue, glowing eyes, extremely alert behind their dark lashes. There was, too, that pale-gold tuft which would protrude over the crown of his head despite the efforts of the entire family—from Katya's moistened forefinger to the brush wielded by Dad—to keep it down . . .

Kolya was admitted to music school, and now he had to sit at the piano, practising scales and exercises for an hour, sometimes two hours, every day. Zhenya could not understand why anyone should be strumming the same thing over and over again and yet be unable to play the tune of a popular song, like "The moon shines, the moon shines bright." He genuinely pitied Kolya.

Fyodor Nikolayevich, Kolya's Dad, and Natalia Nikolayevna, his mother, were both textile designers. When Kolya came in, he found them busy over a new pattern, which he knew was an order from a theatre. A piece of material was stretched over a frame, and jars, flat tins, and pots with paint-brushes sticking out of them stood on the table and all the chairs. The room had that peculiar smell of spirit, paint and paraffin which habit had endeared to Kolya. The smell fascinated him and gave him a sense of pride in the work of his parents and their skill which could make a tightly stretched piece of material come alive with gay vivid patterns or sometimes with letters.

It was the smell of home, as dear as the fluffy hair on the nape of Mother's neck, which Kolya always contrived to kiss when she bent over his bed to say good night. It was as much a part of his life as the answers that Dad gave before bedtime to the questions which had cropped up during the day. It was like Katya's uneven clatter on the stairs, as she brought both chubby feet together on each step. It was as familiar as the rough purring of Vaksa, the black cat, when, with tail held stiffly erect, she brushed against the legs of all the chairs in turn.

Dad and Mother drew the gayest and prettiest designs which were sent to textile mills as patterns for cloth. Whenever Kolya caught sight of some passer-by wearing a print which he recognized as his parents' design, his heart would swell with pride.

"Mum—today again I saw a woman in a blouse with that pattern you made last year," he would call out joyfully. "I knew it at once by those curly things on it."

For Kolya the word "work" meant only the kind of work that his parents did. Once, when told that their two neighbours, a book-keeper and an engineer, were off to their respec-

tive jobs, he asked in surprise: "But where are their brushes?" Kolya could not conceive of work which did not require the use of paint-brushes.

When his father and mother were at work, both of them lean, thin-faced, with a subtle resemblance to each other, Kolya felt that everything at home was as it should be, and it was not such a strain for him to sit a whole hour at the piano, playing the tedious exercises over and over again. But today he begged for a brief postponement so that he could try out on paper the discovery he had made in the yard.

"Mum! Dad! May I draw just a little first? I'll practise longer afterwards."

But at that time drawing was looked upon as play and amusement for Kolya, whereas music was serious work. Besides, a definite time had been set for everything; and it was now Kolya's time to practise at the piano.

"Ta-ra-ra-ra, early in the morning, ta-ra-ra-ra, when it was still misty, ta-ra-ra-ra, train arriving . . ."

What if he were to try, not to draw what was in his mind, but to play it? He pictured the scene: the broad quiet field, with the air still damp, then the sun beginning to rise. Early dawn, the birds twittering, and from the distance, the train approaching through the mist . . . the rumble of the wheels growing louder and louder . . . the sound of the whistle and the station bell . . .

Mother and Dad had gone out into the kitchen. Kolya did not notice they had come back and were standing in the doorway.

"Kolya," began his father, "that's a fine way of playing your exercises!"

Mother cut him short with a movement of her hand.

"What were you improvising, Kolya?"

Kolya fidgeted on the music-stool.

"Well, I meant it to be early morning and a mist. The sun was just going to rise and a train was coming in. Did the music sound like it at all, Mum-Dad?"

"It all sounded pretty misty to me, so there must have been a mist somewhere," his father laughed.

"Hardly," sighed Mother. "To me it seemed mostly a vague strumming and banging."

Kolya turned on the stool.

"It's something I want to draw," he said. "I think I know how to, now."

When he had played all the scales and exercises, Kolya, without even bothering to whirl round on the music-stool, as he would always do after he finished practising, sprang to his feet and dashed to his favourite corner of the room. Getting hold of a pencil, he divided a piece of paper into small squares; he never drew large-sized pictures. Now he could find out whether what had so astonished him in the sands was an important discovery or only a delusion.

Rapidly and determinedly, his hand shaking with impatience, Kolya began to draw the sketch that was in his mind. There were the field, the steppe, the railway station; and from the station ran the railway track, two horizontal lines with sleepers between, extending far, far into the distance.

Often before he had tried to make the rails and telegraph poles recede into the distance, as they actually did when you looked at them, as he himself had seen again and again in the pictures of real painters and when he had gone with Dad by electric railway to the country place at Mamontovka. But he had always failed. His rails and sleepers ran up the middle of the picture like a ladder, or cut across it like a fence, with no

indication of where the train would come from. And the walls of the station-house looked flat and out of joint as if the building had come apart. But today, as he was telling Zhenya and Katya the new story he had thought up and drawing the railway tracks running out of the station, he suddenly saw, at first in a blinding flash, and then quite clearly, that railway lines going into the distance kept getting nearer and nearer each other till they merged at a single point. Telegraph wires, all of them, would rush together till the farthest telegraph pole turned into a tiny point, too. Hardly had he traced all this on the sand when the marvel happened—the lines vanished as if they had dived into a newly formed crater in the sand.

And now, with the feverish haste, excitement and absorption of a real discoverer, Kolya was drawing the same thing on paper. The very same marvel was repeated. The paper seemed to form a hollow in the middle where Kolya had drawn the rim of the earth. Kolya drew the sun rising from the very hollow that had come into being so suddenly, as if by magic, from great vistas which the rails and telegraph wires ran to meet. It had been easy enough to reach that point with a pencil, but the eye could hardly follow it, so far had it receded into the depths of the paper.

Cautiously glancing around, Kolya held his drawing to the light, with the back of the paper towards him. He was almost sure he would be able to see the station from that point in his picture where the sun rose from the earth's rim. But the station showing through the paper was still near the front lower edge of the drawing—although, of course, it was now in the right, not the left-hand corner—and the mysterious distant point receded again, this time in the opposite direction.

Delighted with his discovery, Kolya kept turning the tiny drawing over and over in his hands. Tomorrow he would draw a big bridge with a train passing over it, and a sentry-box with a sentry standing in front. Then he would draw the Kremlin wall which would recede into the distance, the battlements getting smaller and smaller. He could not understand children who set about drawing without having any idea of what they wanted to draw, just making lines on paper. Kolya always had his subject thought out beforehand—and now there were scores of new “thought-ups” revolving in his mind.

Kolya wanted to share his discovery with his parents—perhaps after all it wasn’t what he thought. Eager for their judgement, he carefully placed the drawing in front of his mother and father.

“Look, Dad, Mum—it’s come out funny, hasn’t it?”

Natalia Nikolayevna bent over the drawing and then turned to look at Kolya’s face.

“Did anyone show you how to draw this? Did you really do it by yourself?”

“Of course I did it by myself.”

When Kolya had run off into the yard again, Fyodor Nikolayevich said to his wife:

“What do you think of that? Kolya’s discovered the laws of perspective all by himself!”

“Oh, he’s bright,” she agreed. “Think how long it usually takes children to understand that—and he’s arrived at it all by himself, with no one to help. And he’s only six.”

“Six and a half,” corrected the father.

Chapter 2

RAINBOW COLOURS

How exciting and interesting a yard is! There are row upon row of windows giving glimpses of life during the day and casting mysterious reflections by night. And there are so many people going into the house to their flats, and going out again on their various affairs. A yard is like a lock letting streams of people out into the open roaring sea beyond its gates, and returning them to their homes in the evening.

Kolya loved his great big yard.

To the grown-ups it was a yard like thousands of others all over Moscow, and it hurt Kolya to hear them say patronizingly: "We're very quiet here, living away from the heart of things—nothing ever happens."

The grown-ups were doing an injustice to their yard. Couldn't they see that it was linked with the great and interesting things going on in the outside world. True, the yard faced quiet Plotnikov Street, with the very ordinary yards of the Arbat neighbourhood to the right and left of it. But underneath it the Arbat line of the Moscow underground had been dug the same year as Kolya was born. Zhenya swore that if you put your ear to the ground at night when everything was quiet, you could hear the rumble of trains passing under the earth. Often, towards evening, when no one was looking, Kolya would lie on the cold earth in the yard trying to catch the subterranean sounds. He was certain he heard them . . . just as lying in bed at night he heard sounds which the breeze brought through the open window—the whistling of steamers coming from the Volga by way of the new canal to Moscow, and the tender, muffled chimes of the clock on the Kremlin tower.

And what a sky there was over the yard! Surely grown-up people had not forgotten the almost transparent balloon that had hung high in the air one clear September day; that balloon, looking like a speck from below, had carried three very brave men up into the stratosphere.

To tell the truth, Kolya himself did not remember that day very well, for he was only two years old at the time, but he had heard many stories connected with it. Mother had so often recalled his jumping up and down in the yard, stretching his hands up and shouting gleefully: " 'loon, 'loon!" that he had come to believe he actually remembered seeing the delicate oblong-shaped first Soviet stratospheric balloon soaring in the sky.

One thing, however, Kolya remembered quite distinctly, although he was only three years old at the time. It was a red-winged aeroplane flying over the yard and himself together with other boys climbing on to the roof and shouting: "Chkalov, Chkalov!"

Valeri Chkalov was indeed flying over Moscow, over Arbat Street, over the house where Kolya lived, on the way back from his long-distance flight. It meant that the route passed over the yard of Number 10, Plotnikov Street.

The house stood far back from the street. The window of the room where Kolya practised the piano looked on an old wall with greenish spots on it, rising to the right of an out-building where the famous Russian chess-player, ex-champion of the world Alyokhin, was born. And you could see the fence with the oak-tree's branches spreading over it. That place by the fence, beneath the oak branches, was the children's favourite haunt. Here they held council, here they gathered in the evening to play and to plan games for the next day, to gabble rhymes in order to choose captains and pick sides.

Just now all the kids were there. Kolya could see them from his seat at the piano. Red-headed Zhenya was blowing up the football, and little Katya in her matter-of-fact way was gravely making pies out of wet sand with the two little girls next door. Uncle Grisha, the taxi-driver, coming home for dinner, drove into the yard and pulled up at his door. Semyon Orlov, the janitor, was brushing away the puddles which recent rain had left on the pavement. The little boys, who usually ran after him trying to get under the spray as he flushed the yard and the pavement with his hose, were splashing in the puddles with their trousers rolled up. Pretending to run out of the way of Semyon's broom, they gleefully exposed their bare shins to be swished.

All this was going on right under the window, a stone's throw away. Kolya could even hear the wheezing of the ball that Zhenya was blowing up, the whine of the air as it filled the inner case. He could hear Katya in her slow deliberate way telling her playmates what she would cook for her doll's dinner, and the shouting of the boys caught by Semyon's broom. But Kolya had still another half an hour to sit on the piano-stool and practise—do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, si . . .

"A rainbow, look at the rainbow!" he heard the children shout suddenly in the yard.

Without removing his fingers from the keyboard, Kolya looked up. Over the old wall, bathed in the copper of the sunset, and above the roof with the old-fashioned dormer window, a glorious arc spanned the sky, growing brighter and brighter, its colours alive with soft clear light. Below, everything took on a gay festive look! Leaves looked greener, moist ridges gleamed on the roofs. The children playing in the yard were quiet as they gazed at the radiant colours arching the sky.

Kolya went on practising the scales, but his eyes were on the rainbow, and soon he saw another one a little below the first. It was not so bright and looked as though it might melt at any moment, but it had all the seven colours of the spectrum.

He kept looking at the rainbows and wondered at the strange coincidence: that his fingers played seven notes before beginning the next octave, and that there were seven colours playing in the rainbow. And now each key as he struck it seemed to take colour—a rainbow taking shape under his fingers. He was so delighted that he began to sing at the top of his voice in tune to the piano scales.

It must be said, however, that Kolya's little discovery won him neither joy nor acclaim. When Mother and Dad came home, they saw that all the notes in Kolya's music book had been coloured with crayons. Do was red, re orange, mi yellow, and so on. The fact that the music book was brand-new did not improve matters.

For a long time afterwards Kolya felt the mystic spell of the number seven. It was obviously a very important number used in many popular sayings. "Don't expect seven to wait for one," Father would say when the family, all set for a visit to Granny, was kept waiting while Kolya put his crayons into the box. There were seven knights in a fairy-tale about a dead princess. In another story he had read about a brave little tailor who boasted that he could "lay down seven with one blow." The saying "Answer for one trouble, answer for seven," comforted Zhenya one day when he broke a window-pane with his ball, at the same time upsetting a pitcher of milk on the window-sill.

But why seven should be more important than any other number was a mystery to Kolya. Even Zhenya, who was par-

ticularly clever about numbers, could not explain it to him. Zhenya was a wizard at sums and would stagger the younger children by springing on them a figure that seemed a mile long, with no end of naughts—informing them calmly that it was the distance between the earth and the farthest star. Or the awestruck youngsters would hear him uttering grimly: “One gram of rattlesnake poison powder will kill twenty dogs, sixty horses, six hundred rabbits, two thousand guinea-pigs, three hundred thousand pigeons and one hundred and sixty-seven human beings.”

Zhenya had his own peculiar idea of the order in which numbers followed each other.

“First comes an empty space, then air, then a naught, and after it one, two,” he would say to his small round-eyed listeners.

But about the number seven Kolya could get nothing out of Zhenya that would help to account for its power.

And to Kolya the most astounding thing was that he himself was then seven years old.

Kolya was now more and more drawn to paper, crayons and paints, inspired perhaps by his father and mother who worked tirelessly on beautiful new designs for textiles. The tiny pictures which he put on paper were more satisfying to his creative urge than the vague tunes he tried to improvise at the piano. Kolya, his parents noticed, after softly picking at the chords in an effort to compose a tune, would abruptly slam the lid of the piano, and, still with a look of absorption, would dash to his corner and begin to sketch.

He continued to draw on bits of paper no bigger than a match-box. He liked to work on his little pictures while his mother read aloud, which she usually did on his request after

he had practised the allotted number of exercises and pieces at the piano. On a slip of paper scarcely two inches square he would draw a brightly coloured merry-go-round, or the famous candy-striped parachute tower which he had seen in the Park of Culture and Rest, the pavilions at the Agricultural Exhibition, steamers puffing down the Moskva-Volga Canal, the Kremlin towers, the new bridges over the Moskva River, the stratospheric balloon, a May Day demonstration.

Kolya found it a real treat to go for strolls round Moscow with his father. On these occasions the two were linked together as *men*. Kolya never even asked for an ice-cream, but gave all his attention to keeping in step with his father as they walked along the streets of Moscow, an ever-growing, beautiful town with no limit to its possibilities. And Dad knew so much about Moscow that you couldn't help making exciting discoveries whenever you went for a walk with him.

After each of these walks Kolya would make tiny pictures of the Metro stations, of some large factory, of a railway bridge etched against the sky with its intricate mesh of steel beams, rails and sleepers, all wonderfully obedient to the magic of perspective which Kolya had discovered a year ago when he was sketching in the sand.

Kolya selected about fifty of these little pictures and stuck them neatly into an album. Then he drew some patterns on the cover and wrote: "To Dad from Kolya."

Since this was meant as a surprise, only drawings which his father had not seen went into the album. Along with tiny pictures of new Moscow, there was a sketch of the fairy-tale Tsar Sultan, seated on his throne to receive a party of seafarers. True, the throne was set in a quaintly designed structure, suspiciously like a soft drinks booth, and the seafarers wore

modern sailors' caps, shirts and jackets. Fyodor Nikolayevich, who was deeply touched by his son's gift, found also drawings of Bakhchisarai and other places which the family had visited during a trip to the Crimea.

There was something in the pictures that made his parents look long at them. With an extraordinary feeling for space and composition the boy had packed into a medallion the size of a wrist-watch the sea, mountains, cottages on cliffs, the smoke of bonfires on the shore, and rows of cypresses. There was still much that was childish and even crude in these miniatures, some being like ordinary childish drawings, which please no one but the young artist's close relations. But these were few and seemed out of place in the album, as if they had found their way there by accident. Most of the drawings the father and mother found worth their professional attention.

In nearly every drawing, however tiny, the concept of the small draughtsman was clear. He made skilful use of the little space allowed, and the tiny Crimean view, the Dnieper Dam, the holiday bazaar in Moscow he drew gave no impression of crampedness—so carefully and with such thought were the pictures planned. There was room enough for the outlines of the lamp posts and railing along a new bridge, for the twenty-two figures of the footballers, all concentrating on the ball, the spindly green cypresses, the factory yards.

There was only one thing wrong with the album: Kolya ought not to have given titles to his pictures or at least he should not have written them down. Fyodor Nikolayevich, when he read them, threw up his hands in horror at the atrocious spelling.

"Where have you seen words spelled like that?" he cried. "You've got every single word wrong!"

Kolya said nothing but the fragile lobes of his ears crimsoned and in another minute he was blushing from neck to brow. Little Katya took a different view.

"If you don't like the pictures, Dad," she said, "let me have them. I don't mind the bad spelling—I can't read anyway."

Her interruption eased the tension. Dad did not give the album to Katya, but sat down at the table and took Kolya on his knees. For a long time he discussed each picture with him, explaining what was good and what was bad, where he had succeeded and where he had failed, what was true and what was false in his drawing.

"They'll teach you how to spell at school," said the father. "As for drawing, we don't know yet whether you'll take it up."

"I will," Kolya said softly, but very firmly.

"Well, that remains to be seen. For the time being—keep your eyes open."

"But not for picture postcards," observed Natalia Nikolayevna. "No copying of pretty views. It won't do you any good, nor teach you anything. It's like picking out old tunes by ear at the piano, instead of playing seriously from notes. Learn to trust your eye."

"Why is it right to trust one's eye and wrong to trust one's ear, Mum?"

Kolya was soon convinced that this was a false comparison. To play random pieces by ear, with no real knowledge of music or the laws of harmony, meant neglecting the true music handed down in written form by talented, skilled musicians, music which helped one to understand life. It meant just puzzling out something which only faintly resembled true art. On the other hand, using your eye in drawing from nature developed your powers of observation, and you learned by yourself, without



Porch Near the Oak-Tree. *Water-colour*

stealing something ready-made from others, and so you worked in earnest to produce something truthful.

"But, of course, you're too young to understand all that," said Mother, "and there's no need to worry your head about it. Your concern now is to study hard, to become educated, and we want you to study music. As for drawing, we'll see how things turn out."

But Kolya was not willing to wait and see how things turned out. He was eager to test his powers without delay, and an opportunity soon presented itself.

Dad and Mother had received an urgent order from the theatre to decorate a large silk stole. They stretched the thin stuff over a frame, specially set up for the purpose, traced a design with a fine brush over a cardboard stencil, fixed it carefully with hot paraffin and left the stole to dry, so that later on they could put the finishing touches by adding bright colours from the many gay pots on Dad's work-table. The stole being very wide, one end of the frame was on the table and the other on the window-sill.

After getting Kolya and Katya to bed and saying good night to them, Dad and Mother went off to a meeting of the Artists' Union.

Here, thought Kolya, was an opportunity to show what he could do, and at the same time be of service to his parents.

"Katya," he called softly to make sure she was asleep. Then he got out of bed and went into the room where the silk was drying, took up a paint-brush, moved some pots of paint to the edge of the table and set to work. The material, as taut on the frame as silk on an open umbrella, made you want to flick your finger against it. Kolya, unable to reach the design traced on the silk, got up on a chair, first at one side of the frame and then

at the other. But that didn't help and he almost knocked the frame off the window-sill. It looked as if he would have to abandon his purpose, promising and exciting as it had seemed.

However, when he found himself under the frame, Kolya noticed that the outlines in paraffin showed right through the material. That gave him an idea: what did it matter which side the drawing was on? Kolya put the pots of paint on the floor and got under the frame; after a moment's thought—even biting his tongue in his zeal—he dipped his brush into the paint and set to work on the design from the bottom. Working this way was inconvenient and the paint dribbled, but Kolya had often been told that all great things are accomplished at a sacrifice. So he daubed away, dripping with perspiration and aniline paint, frequently changing brushes and shifting position as his arm grew cramped.

Kolya did not hear his parents return from their meeting. However, when they caught sight of the bright light in the window, they guessed that something was wrong. And when they looked at the stole, they stopped in horror in the doorway. The table hid Kolya from view, but strange undulations passed jerkily over the material, which bulged and sagged, showing ominous spots of blue, orange, violet and yellow. They knew at once who the culprit was. The figure they pulled out from under the table looked more like a peacock than a little boy, his face and night-shirt glowing with every hue imaginable.

There is no need to describe what followed. But, as luck would have it, the next day was Sunday, and Mother, Dad and Katya (who was quite heart-broken over Kolya's misfortune) went for a boat trip on the Moskva-Volga Canal. Granny, Evdokia Konstantinovna, went along with them, and only one

member of the family was not aboard the snow-white steamer *Levanevsky* and that, of course, was Kolya.

He sat alone in the empty house, listening to the slow, uneven tick of the clock on the wall. Tick-ri-ri-tick, tack-ri-ri-ri-tick-tack . . . On the sofa, kept warm by blankets and pillows, stood a casserole with the culprit's dinner. Kolya was not even in a mood to draw.

Suddenly catching sight of Zhenya in the yard, Kolya jumped on to the window-sill, flung open the ventilator—he had been strictly forbidden to open the window—and, standing on tiptoe, called to his playfellow. But Zhenya turned away abruptly.

“Zhen . . . ! Come along in. Nobody's at home. The coast's clear—I'm all alone.”

He even danced on the window-sill to show how good it was to be alone at home. Zhenya was silent, he did not turn, but hung his bright red, mischievous head, and Kolya noticed that his left ear looked larger than the right and was even redder than his hair.

“What's the matter with your ear? It's swollen, isn't it?” Kolya asked through the ventilator.

Zhenya only shrugged. Then Kolya remembered that the night before he had heard some commotion in the part of the yard where Zhenya lived. Now he was beginning to understand. Lifting himself up on his hands, he stuck his head out.

“Say, Zhenya, did you get a beating? Stop wagging your head and come in—d'you think it's any fun to be here alone? Listen, they've made me stay home . . . I got it in the neck yesterday, too. Come in and I'll tell you about it.”

Zhenya turned, frowning, to the window, spat through clenched teeth, and passed his hand over the swollen ear, which was

bright red with a shot of purple—all very much like a cock's comb.

"All right, open the front door," he growled.

"Can't—I promised Dad not to go downstairs. Here, you'd better take the key and come up."

He threw the key which fell ringingly on the pavement. A minute later Zhenya was with Kolya.

"You got it, too?" Zhenya scrutinized him. "You should worry, so long as it doesn't show."

"That's where you're wrong. I'd rather have my ears boxed any time than listen to the hour's lecture I got yesterday. They said I had no respect for the work of others—they even called me a wrecker."

"I bet you bawled."

"Not out loud. I did a little, to myself."

"I didn't bat an eyelid."

"Don't know about an eyelid, but your ear's a sight for sore eyes," Kolya said sympathetically.

"It all happened because I got hold of Dad's plane and began shaving some wood. I only wanted to help him, but he said I'd spoiled the plane and he gave me a sock on the ear. I swear I'll never try to help Dad again."

"The same thing happened to me."

The two friends confided their troubles to each other, and spoke bitterly about grown-up people, who had the upper hand and the power to do as they pleased.

"It's quite unfair," said Zhenya. "They think just because they're big they can do anything they please, but it isn't always size that counts. Take electric current—it may kill an elephant at a shot, but it won't hurt a mouse."

"We've got to hurry and grow up ourselves," Kolya put in. "Then things will be easier."

"What are you going to be when you grow up—have you made up your mind yet?"

"First I wanted to be a musician, then I decided I'd be an artist, but after what's happened I don't care for either . . . I'm going to be a sailor and roam the seas. What about you?"

"Well," Zhenya hesitated. "I really want to be an engine-driver. You can see much of the world that way too."

Kolya, absorbed in a new "thought-up," stared at his friend with eyes in which a blue light sparkled.

"Why not potter with the engines on a ship? The same ship as I'm going to sail on. All right?"

"All right," answered Zhenya. "I'll join your ship. I certainly will if they don't leave my ears alone. Can you play 'The Wide Open Sea'? Don't know it? All right, play anything."

Kolya sat down at the piano, letting his fingers glide swiftly over the keys as he played scales.

"Can you do it backwards?" Zhenya wanted to know. Kolya played a descending scale.

Then—"Let me make a drawing of 'The Wide Open Sea' for you," he volunteered.

When Mother, Dad, Granny and Katya came home from their boat trip they found the two "sailors" lying together on the couch, dozing softly. On the table, beside the empty casserole, lay Kolya's new drawing of the wide open sea, with surging waves in the distance, and a grim crowded shore-line; there was also a ship, plodding through the sea and leaving a long foamy wake.

SENIORS GO THEIR WAY

Katya always envied her seniors and thought how thrilling it must be to be as bold and independent as they were. Zhenya and the other boys, for instance, were free to do as they liked, and they were afraid of nothing. They went right through the yard gate into the street; they rushed at top speed down the stairs, taking two and sometimes three steps at a time; they were not a bit afraid of Dzhulbars, the Alsatian sheep-dog next door. And how far, how wonderfully they could spit! Uncle Grisha, the taxi-driver, let them pump his tyres, and even Comrade Orlov, the janitor, would sometimes let them hold the long hose to water the yard and the pavement.

And what was she? A mere Figgimigigit, Kolya called her. Nobody knew what it meant, but to Katya it was an insulting name. The other name, Simarik-Barbarik, that her elder brother called her, was even more horrid and senseless. Everybody, including Mother and Dad, wondered why Kolya gave his sister such a funny nickname, but he only smiled impishly.

"Mummy, he's teasing me again," Katya would complain.

"Kolya, why do you tease your sister? You're a big boy now—it's time you gave it up."

"Oh, Mum, I'm not teasing her—can I help it if she's a Figgimigigit and a Simarik-Barbarik, too?"

"He's at it again, Mum!"

"Can't you take a joke!"

"I don't care for jokes," Katya would answer stubbornly.

Kolya could not very well explain to Katya that Figgimigigit and Simarik-Barbarik were mysterious beings inhabiting the wilds of the taiga, where Kolya and Zhenya were brave frontier

guards. This was the boys' secret which Kolya guarded as jealously as he did the secret of the frontier post in the yard, and in the same way as he treasured the shield hung over his bed. He had made it himself from plywood, with a wolf's paw nailed to it, a genuine wolf's paw—although red-headed Zhenya had his doubts and claimed it was only a dog's paw.

Poor Figgimigigit was too young to be initiated into such mysteries, but she often saw Kolya and Zhenya, armed with swords and shields, waging war on the next-door yard, where Victor, their chief enemy, lived. And this filled her with even greater envy for her seniors.

Katya was growing up into a practical, sensible little person. In the yard she was referred to as "that sensible little girl." She was always extremely tidy, and she invariably had a bit of practical information at the tip of her tongue.

"I've had a nap," she would say. Or "I've come to get a breath of air," or "We had chicken broth with vermicelli, meat, and fruit jelly for dinner, and I ate it all up." At table she liked to imitate all that the grown-ups did. She was not given mustard, of course. And so she pretended that the gravy on the edge of her plate was mustard, and she would put some on each mouthful, wrinkling her nose just as Dad did, to show that it was very sharp.

The bigger you were, the more grown-up you were, the more wonderful was life, Katya felt.

Kolya's thoughts ran along the same channels. He envied Zhenya for being two years older than himself, so that he enjoyed greater liberty and, above all, went to school. And something exciting was always happening at school: somebody would lose his cap, ink would be spilt in the passage, a film about wild animals or daring explorers would be shown.

Zhenya had no doubts as to what he was going to do with his

life. Zhenya's first idea had been to train as an engine-driver, but later he changed his mind. He was going to be a skilled metal-worker, he told everybody now, and he already showed some aptitude for his chosen work. He could make splendid windmills which, when you fixed them to the top of the fence, would rattle and tinkle as they whirled, striking envy into the heart of Victor Lanevsky on the other side of the fence. Zhenya was good at mending broken toys too—at a glance he understood the make of almost any mechanical toy; and everyone said that Zhenya Striganov could do anything he put his hand to. His father, Stepan Porfiryevich, the carpenter, approved of Zhenya's choice.

"He's going in for the right thing. If you take wood—nowadays it's no longer a basic material. It's needed for scaffolding, timbering, makeshift premises, trimming. It is metal—iron and steel—that is the backbone of building today. Of course, carpentry is no slapdash job. I know some people say: 'An axe, a saw—that's all there is to it.' But they should know better. Our job needs plenty of understanding and skill. Some people can't tell pile-work from crib-work or a peg from a dowel. Take yourself, Kolya—you're a smart boy, you read books and you can draw, but do you know what a match plane is? Of course, you don't, but ask any carpenter and he'll tell you all about it. So you see every job, every trade has its own secrets."

Kolya was very proud of his friendship with the carpenter who had built the splendid pavilions at the Agricultural Exhibition in Moscow. He had also helped in the construction of the new bridges, wide and high, over the Moskva River where Kolya, on his rambles with Dad, liked to look down over the railings.

It was fine to watch Stepan Porfiryevich chip a block of wood

into shape with exact, easy flicks of the axe, which looked like a toy in his hands, or to see him plane a board with effortless strokes, while shavings curled like smoke from the funnel of a rapidly moving steamer. What amazed Kolya most was the carpenter's faultless eye. He would pick up a plank deftly, judging the dimensions without any instruments on a joiner's bench he had made for himself; then, after planing it, he held it up to his eye as he would a gun, spying at once the slightest unevenness.

Once, taking a chance look at one of Kolya's drawings, the carpenter said: "Look, boy, it's crooked on this side . . ."

Kolya blushed and had to admit that he was right.

"Let me give you a piece of advice, Kolya," went on the carpenter. "Anyone who's got it in him will find a way, for everyone's got a chance to study." He stopped, shaking back his hair so that the copper curls danced all over his head. "They used to say I had it in me too, Kolya. When I was a lad like you I could make anything out of a bit of planking. I could have been a fine cabinet-maker, a carver, a turner, making the best-grade furniture and so on. But we never had the chances you have, my boy. You must understand that and not forget it."

Kolya, whose intuition and judgement were developed far beyond his years, sensed the longings and frustrated ambition that had once possessed this red-haired giant. And when Kolya watched admiringly the man's quick movements with chisel or hammer, his way of cutting a deep groove in the wood, or driving a nail right into a heavy plank with one swift, easy blow of the hammer, as if the wood were as soft as putty, Stepan Porfiryevich would say:

"Think I'm clever at it, don't you? That's the way of human beings, Kolya—there's nothing they can't do, nothing they

can't turn their hands to. They can chop and they can turn, work with iron or sow grain, play musical instruments or paint pictures with a brush, as you do. Only you've got to put your back into it, and no dilly-dallying—your hands must know how to work, to work for yourself, for the people, not as it used to be, to fill some rich man's pockets.

“Human beings are made to be happy—they have all the equipment for living prosperous and beautiful lives. But think what a long time people lived on the earth without ever knowing happiness. Man had legs but hadn't the right to use them to go where he wanted. He had a brain ripe for knowledge, but he had no chance to learn. He was born with hands that could do anything.” Stepan Porfiryevich rolled up his sleeves, showing strong muscular arms covered with reddish hair; then he flung the hammer into the air and caught it. “But shackles were put on those hands so that they could do only what the boss wanted. And man had eyes, only to be kept in darkness. Do you get what I mean? . . .

“As to myself, to tell the truth, I had no sense at first—I didn't understand what freedom really meant to us. I was foolish enough to think that since ordinary folk like myself were now managing the country there was no need to stuff oneself with too much learning. So I wasted my time and let the best years go by. Now I'm trying to make up for it—I'm taking a course to improve my skill, have got to, but of course I could have done a great deal better with my hands if I'd been educated in my youth. As for you, Zhenya, and the rest of the lads, see that you make the most of the chances you've got. If I were your age what wouldn't I do!”

And hardly raising his arm, he drove a great nail into the heavy plank with a brief stroke of the hammer.



Deer at Zoo

But some nights, usually Saturday nights, Stepan Porfirievich would come into the yard after his day's work, treading with over-precise movements, but strangely unsteady on his feet. He reminded Kolya then of a tourist whom Dad and he had happened to meet on their visit to the Agricultural Exhibition; the man had spoken almost perfect Russian, but all the time you had the feeling that it was not his native tongue.

On these occasions Zhenya, avoiding Kolya's eyes, would hasten to get his father home. Good-humouredly Stepan Porfirievich allowed himself to be taken home, but as he walked, he thrust his fingers into his son's carrotty hair and, pressing the crown of the boy's head with his hand, would force him to make comic little bows.

"Stop it, Dad!" Zhenya would mutter, without attempting a release.

"Bow your head! Bow your head!" his father would insist. "I'm a carpenter, my boy, a Jack-of-all-trades, and what are you? A tinker, a dough-turner, that's what you are. We carpenters are the salt of the earth. Everybody salutes the carpenter!"

Kolya was sorry to see Zhenya ashamed of his father at such times. His own admiration for the carpenter never wavered; a carpenter's work was so real, so tangible! He produced solid objects that anyone could see, not just silly pictures.

There was another person in the yard who was greatly envied by Kolya and the boys of his age. This was Kostya Yermakov, a boy in the tenth form at school, who was a member of the Chkalov Air Club.

Everything about this boy appealed to Kolya. He was a well-grown, good-natured lad with a tiny Komsomol badge on his brown ski-jacket, and a badge in the shape of a parachute

with "10" on it for the number of jumps he had made. On spring mornings, wearing only a singlet, he did setting-up exercises under the oak-tree. If the girls wanted to dance in the evening, they would call him out to play his mandolin under the same oak-tree. The younger boys worshipped Kostya, who could always divert them with interesting games or puzzles. He could make a bow and arrows and correct the mistakes in Zhenya's plane and other models. Kostya, soon to join the Institute of Transport Engineers, was always brought in to settle disputes, and when they played football against the boys of No. 12, next door, Kostya was the referee.

Zhenya and Kolya would have done anything for Kostya. They took messages for him to a schoolgirl named Klavdia, who lived next door. They didn't understand a word of what was written in the notes, and they were rather puzzled why Kostya, who was fearless in the air—how else could he have made all those parachute jumps?—should be so timid when he stood on solid earth beside Klavdia, who seemed harmless enough. But they carried the messages—not without risk to themselves, for they had to cross the fence into Victor Lantevsky's territory, and usually they were in a state of war with him. Kostya rewarded the boys with patient friendship, listening indulgently to their stories of battles with the next-door lads. He lent them thrilling books with pictures of airmen and told them of a jump made by five hundred parachutists.

Kostya grew very fond of the slender, meditative little Kolya. He liked his steady, trusting blue eyes, the unruly tuft of fair hair on the crown of his head, and the unexpected questions that he would sometimes fire at the older boys: "What's more important, Kostya, wood or metal?" "It all depends, you say—but what does it depend on?"

In the spring of 1941, Kolya did extremely well in his exams at the music school and was promoted with honours to the next class. That same year Kostya Yermakow was taking his finals at school, and Kolya and Zhenya used to wait at the gate and then run out to meet him, calling: "What did you get?" From the distance Kostya would hold up five fingers, to show that he had got a five, which meant: "Excellent."

Kostya was through with his last examination on the 20th of June and the graduation exercises were to be held on the 21st. According to a popular practice in Moscow schools, the boys and girls, to wind up the graduation party, would walk to the Red Square, to Lenin's Mausoleum. There, hand in hand, they would march across the Red Square, as on parade, past the Kremlin walls with the star-crowned towers.

It was from a message they carried to the next-door yard that Kolya and Zhenya learned about this. After getting a reply for Kostya and proudly refusing the caramels which Klavdia offered them, they went back to sound Kostya carefully on the subject of the moonlight march across the square. Would he take them with him?

"Well—who put a crazy notion like that into your heads?" cried Kostya. "The party won't be over until midnight—and who'll let infants like you on to the Red Square that time of night?"

"Infants!" Zhenya took offence. "Hear that, Kolya? When it comes to taking messages next door, we're big enough to be trusted, but when *we* ask *him* to do something for us we're infants!"

"Come on, Kostya, don't let us down—you can manage it," Kolya pleaded.

"That's going too far, boys. You know I'll get it from your

parents if I take you along. Anyway, who's going to let you out in the middle of the night?"

"We'll not ask anybody!" Zhenya said stoutly. "We'll just slip out to the school—you wait for us at the gates."

Kolya wavered at first, unable to decide on anything so drastic as running away from home. It might lead to all sorts of things, and anyway he didn't like distressing his people at home. Then he remembered it was Saturday and Mother had said she and Dad were going to visit Uncle Volodya that night. He might easily be back before they were. Of course, he would have to make a clean breast of it afterwards, for he couldn't help telling Mother and Dad all about it, and anyway he might think it worth drawing a picture. Also, it was not in Kolya's nature to lie or hide anything from his parents.

But Kostya was adamant: the boys were not to go to the Red Square. However, the two agreed secretly to be at the school gates at midnight and wait there for Kostya.

When Kolya got home, his mother rose from her chair and led him to the window. She turned him to the light and looked into his face.

"Where were you planning to go tonight?" she asked.

The would-be fugitive's face grew a deep red.

"You were going to creep out of the house, without anyone knowing?"

"Mum, it's like this . . ." Kolya began.

Father, sitting on the couch, put aside his newspaper. He kept silent, but managed to look quite severe, although, if Kolya raised his eyes to his father's face, he would have noticed that his lips were pressed together, as if his mouth were full of air which he did not wish to let out. Mother, who had no liking for scenes, only said:

"Ashamed of yourself?"

Kolya nodded.

"All right, that's enough. Now, off you go and wash and get to bed," she said.

Kolya went, greatly puzzled. How had his parents got wind of the affair? As Kolya picked up the towel, he glimpsed through the bars of Katya's bed a pair of slightly scared, curious eyes.

"So, it's your doing?" he said threateningly. He remembered having seen his sister running about the yard that day.

"It isn't . . . I just heard . . ."

Quickly she dropped her head into the pillow and lay still.

"You go telling tales again and see what you'll get!"

"I'm sleeping," Katya muttered through her teeth.

"You've got it coming to you!" Kolya whispered, but Katya did not stir.

That night Kolya dreamed of the Red Square, and the moon over the old serrated wall, lined with grey-green fir-trees. The clock beneath the ruby star chimed ceaselessly as boys and girls of the senior forms strolled up and down the square. Kolya and Zhenya were also there, walking arm in arm with Kostya, one on each side.

"Good morning, darlings!" said Mother, waking Kolya and Katya. "Get up, sleepyheads! You haven't forgotten, Kolya, what we're going to do today, have you?"

How could he have forgotten that Mother had promised at last to take him to the Tretyakov Gallery! Often he had begged his parents to take him there, but they, noticing his intense, growing interest in drawing and painting, were in no hurry. They would not deliberately encourage him to go in for their own profession, and, moreover, they still thought that music

was Kolya's true calling. Everyone at the music school said that Kolya had all the attributes of a true musician: a faultless ear, irreproachable pitch, an artistic sense which showed itself in anything he played, grace in manner, good musical phrasing and a firm hand with long steady fingers, which knew how to press the keys of the piano softly, lovingly.

But at last the day came when Mother, true to her promise, was going to take him to the Tretyakov Art Gallery. Most of the treasures in this famous gallery were familiar to Kolya from picture postcards and reproductions. And now he was going to see them as large as life (as Zhenya would have put it). "The Three Bogatyrs (Warriors)," "Ivan Grozny and His Son," "Peter the First," "The Birch Grove," "Boyarynya Morozova," "Alyonushka," "Deep Waters," "The Girl with Peaches"—he would see them all at last.

But before he went to the gallery, Kolya had two things to attend to. He had to get Kostya Yermakov to tell him what had happened at the Red Square on the previous night. Secondly, he must induce Kostya to act as referee, as usual, at a football match between their yard and the boys next door, who, forgetting their countless defeats, had had the nerve to challenge them. (Stuck-up Victor was captain of the boys in the next-door yard.) The challenge had been accepted three days before and the match was to take place that morning. Kolya had promised to arrange things with Kostya, and he never broke his word if he could help it. He was impatient to get to the gallery, but he couldn't let down his chums, especially the loyal Zhenya.

"Mum, do you mind if we start a little after twelve?" he asked.

"Why so late?"

"Oh, Mum, Zhenya and I have something very important to do."

"They're only going to play football with the boys next door," piped Katya from her bed.

Kolya said nothing but gave her a look full of scorn. Then he turned to his father; he should understand that this was a matter of honour.

"Mother, ask Dad. Once I promised, what would I be doing if I went back on my word. I'd be letting the side down, that's all."

"All right, nobody wants you to do that. Go and defend the honour of the yard."

At the appointed hour, Victor Lanevsky, captain of the next-door boys, was in the yard. With him came the boys of Number 12.

Victor was the son of the manager of a dress shop in Petrovka Street. The boys in Kolya's yard called him a "swell" with good reason. Victor at ten years of age was tall and looked much older than most boys. Spoiled by his mother, he was always dressed "to kill," wearing a short, tight-fitting jacket, a bow-tie, spats with the strangest check and wide knickerbockers. His square-toed, rubber-soled shoes looked foppish even to Zhenya with all his admiration for good footwear. Victor was conceited and looked down on everybody, especially since the time he became captain of the boys in his yard. He had got the boys of two other yards in Plotnikov Street to accept his authority, and he could not forgive Zhenya and Kolya for not acknowledging him as their leader, and for actually egging on other boys to refuse to run errands for him, or keep a place for him in the cinema queue, or to fight boys whom he disliked.

Today the teams were to play with Victor's ball. It was a

fine dark-coloured ball, an object of secret envy to Zhenya and Kolya. Kostya Yermakov, not in the least stuck-up because he had graduated from school and had been in the Red Square the night before, carried out the ritual of placing the ball in the middle of the yard where a line had been traced for it in the sand. The respective captains, Zhenya and Victor, at the insistence of the referee, shook hands frigidly over the ball. Then Kostya spat carefully on one side of the stick with which they had drawn the centre of the field in the sand.

“Dry side,” said Victor.

“Wet,” said Zhenya.

Kostya threw the stick high into the air. It turned over and over and fell, dry side up.

This meant that Victor’s team would start the game. Victor at once dribbled the ball to the side of the yard where, between two heaps of bricks which marked the goal, Zhenya Striganov, goal-keeper and captain, was on guard. Kolya dashed valiantly to intercept Victor, bumped into him and fell headlong, but managed to kick the ball to the opposite side of the field. The onlookers cheered.

It was a Sunday and many of the inhabitants of the house had flung open their windows to watch the game. Football fans sat on a bench under the oak-tree and shouted such good advice that it seemed a pity they were not on the field, for obviously they would have had no difficulty in scoring one goal after another.

The midday June sun was high over the yard, as if it had come on purpose to mark the centre of the field.

In his excitement, Kolya did not notice that many of the windows through which tenants had been looking out were now blank.

Suddenly the Dmitrievs' window was flung open, and Fyodor Nikolayevich looked out. His voice, unnaturally loud, reached every corner of the yard:

"Kolya! Children! There's a war on!"

"Where? Hurrah!" shouted Kolya, still absorbed in the game. But he checked himself at once.

Every player stopped on the run. Only the ball that Victor Lanevsky had kicked rolled on with no one to stop it, its midday shadow forming a black circle, so that it seemed to slide over the earth on a black saucer. It crossed the line in front of the unguarded goal, and gently rolled into the goal itself. But Zhenya did not move to stop it, and Kostya, who was so near it, did not whistle for a goal.

It was clear to Kolya now that something very grave had happened. He screwed up his eyes, as he always did when he could not believe what he saw, and when he opened them again a moment later, the world seemed unfamiliar, withered to a yellow colour, changed out of recognition. It did not change back again, as it usually did, when his eyes grew accustomed to the light. And the faces all around looked darker and wore quite an unfamiliar expression.

The ball, which had rolled to one side, lay by the wall of the house. Katya went up to it, prepared to carry out her duty of bringing it back when it went out of play. But she did not reach the ball, for her mother, who had silently crossed the yard, picked her up in her arms. Without releasing Katya, Natalia Nikolayevna put out her hand to Kolya. She did not say a word, but with a kind of desperation she pressed Kolya and Katya to her, as if with her very being she could protect her children from impending disaster.

Semyon Orlov, the janitor, who had been called away some-

where in the morning, came into the yard. Kolya thought that Uncle Semyon's broad face with its high cheek-bones had a grave, severe beauty. He walked erectly, crossing the yard with unhurried steps, till he came up to Kostya. Respectfully he handed over to him a slip of paper.

"Kostya, I want to give this to you personally. It's from the Military Commissariat . . ."

Chapter 4

WAR CUTS DEEPLY INTO THE LAND

*Hark, what sound is it? The Arabian
riders hasten here?*

*No! Swaying their heavy wings in the air,
The vultures, ominous birds of prey,
come near.*

VALERI BRYUSOV

Kostya went to join thousands of others—men of mature age and men of extreme youth—to stand in the path of the fascists who were swarming into the country. Shortly afterwards, Zhenya's father, Stepan Porfiryevich, was called up, too. Before he went he took time to fit up huge wooden props in the basement as additional supports to the ceiling of what was now a bomb shelter. He went to say good-bye to the Dmitrievs, asking them to keep an eye on Zhenya till his aunt came to take him to the country. After a moment's silence he held out his hand to Kolya.

"Remember I told you how a man's hands could do every sort of work? Now the time has come for our hands to manage rifles—it's the most important job these days."



Soldier

Everywhere men were leaving their homes, trains were making for the Soviet Union's frontiers, which were being overrun by a foe who left behind him a trail of flame and blood. Somewhere far away, it seemed, all roads met at a single point, criss-crossed and gave a new deep meaning to things. But this was not easy to draw; it would not squeeze into the tiny scraps of paper on which Kolya usually depicted anything that took his fancy. He now felt the need of greater space, but with a big sheet of paper he was at a loss; he did not know what to do with all the empty space. Lost in a maze of details, he kept erasing and changing things, and in the end he would tear up the drawing when no one was looking.

His parents' work seemed more important than ever. Along with other artists they were engaged in painting for the war—"camouflage" it was called. On the work-table there were now drawings of every shape of building, which Mother and Dad covered with mysterious blobs and flourishes. Dad explained that such blobs and flourishes were painted by artists on the walls of stations and depots, which were then covered by nets or lengths of material painted in the same way so that from above the buildings looked like gullies, foot-hills and woods. This was done to confuse the fascist airmen. How clever artists were, Kolya thought, and what a good thing it was that Dad and Mother had such special skill. Kolya had something to boast about to Zhenya and something to talk about with Dad in the evenings.

It had become a custom for Kolya to demand before bedtime answers to all the questions which had accumulated during the day.

"Dad, how long will the war last?"

"Who can tell, Kolya. It's a big war."

"How big is it? Zhenya says you could pass all the lines in a day if you went by aeroplane."

"Zhenya's right."

"Is it bigger than from one horizon to another, where the lines meet?"

"It stretches, son, from land to sky, from sea to sea, for thousands and thousands of miles."

Kolya tried to imagine the grim, limitless front-lines with battles raging everywhere, guns firing, tanks crawling along and bayonets lunging. As he listened over the wireless to the daily reports from the front, given by the Soviet Information Bureau, he would get on a chair beside the map and try to find the places he heard mentioned. The flat silent map was powerless to reveal to Kolya how deeply the war had cut into the lives of the people after that never-to-be-forgotten morning when the game in the yard had been cut short by his father's voice coming through the window and deprived of its usual calm. The proposed visit to the Tretyakov Gallery had, of course, been abandoned.

At times, groping his way about the map, Kolya could see to his horror that the places mentioned on the wireless were getting nearer and nearer to the great red star with "Moscow" printed under it. The terrifying distances of war, where all paths met, were rolling towards them.

Kolya turned to his father, sitting on the edge of his bed.

"There's no chance they'll beat us, Dad, is there?" he asked. And his father, usually so gentle and friendly, answered with brief, grim assurance: "None!"

They had completed the fitting out of the bomb shelter in the yard, and Kolya was proud when the house-manager brought

a small piece of canvas on which Mother painted in large, clear letters: "Bomb Shelter."

Kolya was more than ever interested in the work his parents were doing. He was proud to think that their work, the work of artists, was so important. Every time he went out with his father, he saw new, striking posters, calling on everyone to rise in defence of the Motherland and drive the fascists out of the country. And the posters, too, were the work of artists.

On July 22nd, precisely a month after the war began, Kolya and his father, on their way home, met an elderly couple at the corner of Plotnikov and Sivtsev Vrazhek Streets. The man was short, lean and rather severe-looking, with finely chiselled features, a small sharp-pointed beard, and prickly cheek-bones. He wore a black skull cap over his grey hair and he walked with a surprisingly light step, arm in arm with a slender, neat old lady in a black hat. Both carried great sheaves of white lilies. Kolya's father bowed respectfully, and the old man replied with a brief energetic nod. The pair left behind them a waft of lily fragrance.

"Do you know who they are?" Fyodor Nikolayevich asked softly, looking after them. "Try to remember this: the old man is Mikhail Vasilyevich Nesterov, the famous painter. He lives in our neighbourhood, in Sivtsev Vrazhek Street. Just a minute. What's the date? . . . I thought so. D'you know where they're going?—to put flowers on Levitan's grave. Remember the reproductions of Levitan's paintings I showed you? Today is the anniversary of his death and Nesterov hasn't forgotten—he's gone to pay tribute to him."

Falling behind his father, Kolya kept looking back at the

couple, who walked with a quiet but arresting dignity, until they were lost in the maze of Arbat side-streets. Nesterov . . . and Levitan—how often he had heard these names mentioned at home. Levitan, he recalled, had painted a deep pool of water with logs lying across it. While Nesterov painted trees that were slender and ethereal like a wisp of smoke rising from the wick of a snuffed-out candle.

This brief casual meeting kept Kolya's imagination at work for a long time that day—till dusk fell and with it came the spine-chilling cry of the air-raid siren, like an impatient repetition of scales up and down. In every yard, street and lane would be heard the voice of the radio "Citizens, raid warning!" over and over again.

There had been several alarms already, usually soon followed by the "all clear." But this time it seemed as if it would be more serious. Mother took Katya, asleep, in her arms—she hadn't even opened her eyes when she was lifted from bed—and Fyodor Nikolayevich kept a strong grip on Kolya's hand as they hurried to the shelter. The whitish beams of searchlights were already sweeping the sky like long paint-brushes, blotting out the stars. Scores of red flames pricked the darkness beyond Smolenskaya Square, and died out. Anti-aircraft guns rattled their furious answer. All this held such fascination for Kolya that at first he wasn't afraid. But a militiaman came with the house-manager and ordered everybody to go to the shelter at once. At the entrance Kolya ran into Victor Lanevsky, who was stumbling in the dark as he helped his mother to drag a huge suit-case, the size of a trunk. From the yard above there were shouts again for everyone to hurry. The people went downstairs and began to fill the long basement with its vaulted ceiling, lit by an unshaded electric bulb suspended from a makeshift wire.

Many of the faces looked pale and frightened. Katya woke and began to whimper, and Kolya took her warm, chubby little hand between his two palms, which he shaped to resemble a house, and, stopping down, began to blow quietly into it.

"What's the matter now, Figgimigigit? I'm here, so you needn't be frightened."

Speaking to her like that made Kolya forget his own fear, and soon he dropped off to sleep on a plaid spread out in the corner of the shelter.

The next day, at the very same hour, the alarm went again and they had to go down to the shelter. Everybody was sleepy; going into the damp, stuffy basement was no longer a novelty, and besides, this time there was hardly room for everyone. A terrific explosion shook the earth near by, echoing in its very bowels. Everything seemed to rock violently. Bits of the ceiling fell; the log supports swayed and the electric bulb swung back and forth. Small children woke and began to cry. Some women, screaming, jumped to their feet and flung themselves towards the exit.

Blasts from near and far, rolling through the thickness of the earth, could be heard for a long time on that endless, sleepless night. In the morning, when they could leave the shelter, they were horrified to learn that a heavy bomb had been dropped near at hand, in Arbat Street, and had hit the Vakhtangov Theatre.

When Kolya and his Dad went there in the day-time, the boy looked in silence for a long time at the terrible scene of destruction. A huge piece of masonry had been sliced from the corner of the building, which only yesterday had been beautiful and intact. In the house facing the theatre there were black gaping holes instead of windows, and splinter-holes pitted the street.

War had come to Moscow . . .

The next day Kolya heard of what might have been an even worse misfortune. It was reported that a fascist bomb had been dropped into the court of the Tretyakov Art Gallery. A fire started, but the employees on duty had managed to extinguish it and save the gallery's treasures.

It all showed how deeply the war had penetrated.

Air raids were now an everyday occurrence, beginning with an ominous punctuality at exactly the same hour every night.

There was no fear—only an anguishing weariness. Fear came later.

Zhenya was giving no end of trouble because he would not stay in the shelter during the raids but would slip away and even climb to the roof. One day he was among the first to get wind of a piece of stop-press news (which somehow Moscow's little boys managed to find out before anyone else). A fascist plane, he said, brought down by Soviet anti-aircraft guns, was on display in Sverdlov Square.

"A Junkers 88—a real one, I tell you," Zhenya declared.

Along with Fyodor Nikolayevich, the boys set off for Sverdlov Square. It was true: in the centre of the capital, in one of its proudest squares, lay the Hitler plane, supported on boxes, spreading its crushed, battered wings. Pressing against the ropes, which enclosed the bomber, a crowd was looking at the motor, gutted by a well-aimed shell. In angry silence people saw the swastika on the plane's broken tail and the black and yellow crosses on the long, slender fuselage. Painted a dirty green, which looked like a coating of slime on its attenuated body, the fascist plane made you feel clammy, and full of loathing that was almost physical.

Kolya was impatient to step under the ropes and look inside

the bomber, but he had to queue up, for there were many people eager to examine the plane at close range. They were taken, group by group, behind the ropes and right up to the plane. A man with blue shoulder-straps gave detailed explanations and replied to a host of questions. In this he was assisted by the militiamen who were keeping order in the square. They had heard the facts relating to the plane repeated so often that they knew them by heart and were only too eager to impart them to others.

Kolya saw a tall, sad-looking woman stooping to pass under the ropes, then grimly raising herself to her full height. Firmly she approached the plane, leading by the hand a thin little boy of about eleven. Her deeply tanned cheek-bones stood out sharply under a dark kerchief tied at her chin. As the two came near the Junkers, the boy stretched out first his right arm and then his left; then, releasing himself from his mother's grip, he began to pass his hands over the cold, clammy frame of the bomber.

"Hi, there, boy!" warned the militiaman. "We can't have everybody touching the thing—take your hands off and use your eyes."

"I can't," the boy said softly.

The people standing around fell silent. The militiaman looked at the boy's pale face and saw two big, wide-open eyes frozen in their sockets, their gaze directed over the heads of the crowd.

"He can't see a thing," the woman explained in a low voice. "It was one like that," she nodded angrily towards the plane, "that flew over our district. We were on the road—we'd no time to take cover in the wood. So the devil came up and dropped a bomb beside us. We were knocked down, and that's

the story of how my boy lost his sight. The eyes are there all right, but he can't see. It's like shell-shock, the doctors say. I've brought him to Moscow to see if an operation would help."

There was burning hatred in her eyes as she looked at the plane.

"The fascist devil knew well enough what he was doing. Hunting down children with bombs—what could be more horrible?"

The boy kept touching the plane, trying to reach the top. The militiaman bent quickly and picked him up.

"Now, look—sorry, I mean feel," said the militiaman. "That's the gunner's place. And that's for the one who drops the bombs. Give me your hand—there, do you understand? The thing's called a 'Junkers 88'. It's a dive-bomber—it dives when it drops its load."

"I know that," the boy said. "I saw it . . . when the plane got us."

The militiaman looked awkwardly about him and, bending down, said in a quiet, grave tone:

"And now, lad, they've shot him down, so that he wouldn't make any more trouble."

"Is this the same one?" the boy asked dubiously.

"Of course, it is!" The militiaman made a sign to the woman. "Certainly it's the same one. He won't fly any more—he's done for. And we'll get the rest of them too and clip their bandit wings."

Kolya plucked Fyodor Nikolayevich's sleeve.

"Dad, is it really the same one?" he asked in a whisper.

People were pressing in from all sides. They looked pityingly at the thin little boy and kept saying with grave assurance:

"It's the same one, the very same one."

Kolya, too, believed that it was the same one, and thought what a good thing it was that it had been shot down.

Kolya was thoughtful all the way home, and after they had got back he asked suddenly:

"Dad, perhaps he'll be able to see again, will he?"

"Who?"

"The boy."

"Yes, Kolya, maybe they'll cure him."

Sitting in his favourite corner, Kolya spent the rest of the day trying to draw Soviet anti-aircraft gunners firing point-blank at a fascist plane, which somersaulted down in flames. The picture was to some extent an expression of vengeance, but it fell short of conveying what Kolya had felt when he saw the blind boy beside the fascist plane. A little boy looking but seeing nothing—how could you convey that in a drawing? As he usually did in any difficulty, Kolya shut his eyes tightly to get a mental picture of what he wished to draw. He opened them again at once—horrified at the pitch darkness which was the lot of the little boy, unable to see the sky, the trees, the people around.

Opening his eyes as widely as he could, Kolya stood for a long time at the window, looking at the green of the oak-tree beyond the fence, the clear sky with the barrage balloons outlined against it, the roofs, the reddish-grey walls, the lines of different coloured clothes hung out to dry. How wonderful it was to be able to see everything and how many things there were still to be seen! But that boy—he could see nothing.

Kolya for the first time felt real fear. That night when the tormenting scream of the siren sounded through the yard

everyone made for the shelter as usual. Again, a dull roar shook the earth under their feet, and Kolya suddenly dug his head in his mother's lap, grasped her hands and desperately pressed the palms against his ears.

"Mummy, hold me so that I can't hear it—I'm frightened."

The phrase that was on everyone's lips, the thing you heard about on the radio—the *war front*—was no longer something far off. It was approaching ominously, for the fascists were pressing towards Moscow. More and more men in uniform appeared in the autumn streets full of swirling yellow leaves. Some families were moving out of Number 10, Plotnikov Street. They went to the Urals, to Central Asia, to the banks of the Volga, to Siberia. The fact that people from the yard were going to these remote places, known to him only by hearsay, made Kolya feel that the world was expanding and growing bigger. Life opened fresh stern vistas to him.

Kolya's grandmother came one day in great agitation and told them that the treasures of the Tretyakov Art Gallery were being moved. Carefully packed, some had already been sent far away from Moscow; others were now being shipped. The pictures would be kept far in the interior of the country, where no fascist plane could reach them.

Kolya's face fell when he heard this. He had not seen the treasures of the Tretyakov Art Gallery—all because of Hitler. Would he ever see them now?

Kolya soon had to part with Victor, his former enemy of the yard next door. Victor said he was going with his parents to Novosibirsk, which, he boasted, was an even more exciting town than Moscow. He said that they were going by a special train, but it was obvious that he was just bragging from habit, without believing himself in what he was saying.

"I'll train out there, and when I come back we'll finish that match," he said uncertainly.

"Let's have a mixed team when the war is over," said Kolya, wishing to part in good feeling with his former enemy. "A team of boys from both yards to play against the boys from across the street. What do you say, Zhenya?"

"We could," admitted Zhenya. "But who'd be captain?"

"We'll decide that when the time comes," Kolya put in hurriedly, trying to keep the two captains from quarrelling.

Luckily Victor was called home before sharp words were exchanged, and the boys parted in good will.

A few days later Zhenya's aunt arrived to take him to the country.

He went to say good-bye to the Dmitrievs, shaking everyone's hand and wishing them all good luck. Rather awkwardly he thrust into Katya's hand a little metal plane model which he had made himself—complete with propeller. Last of all he put out his hand to Kolya, and then looked away.

"Give one another a hug," said Mother.

The boys went red, shrugged their shoulders, and turned away from each other. Presently, pointing to the plane model, Zhenya said:

"You can wind it up with a bit of elastic—here, this way."

Kolya said: "Leave your address and I'll send you some drawings."

"I'll run away and come back to Moscow," Zhenya said softly, when they went to the door. "They needn't think . . ."

When Zhenya had gone, the yard and the whole house seemed strangely empty. Mother had packed their things and was apparently making ready to leave, too, in case of necessity. Dad

said there were emergency lorries at their uncle's office, and if anything happened the whole family could leave on one of them. Kolya would sometimes sit down quietly at the piano and try to play, but soon he would close the lid and go away. The sound of the piano irritated him, echoing through the painful emptiness of the yard and of his own heart.

One night, when a violent wind was blowing from the north-west, Kolya was awakened by the sound of a heavy rumbling, threatening but muffled as yet. It was not like the dry, hasty volleys of the ack-ack guns, nor the deafening bursts of demolition bombs to which they had grown accustomed. Kolya did not like to wake his parents, but sat up in bed for a long time, listening. He did not sleep any more that night, and next morning he learned in the yard that the strong wind blowing from the north-west had brought echoes of Hitler's heavy assault batteries, which were drawing ever nearer to Moscow. Kolya's sensitive ear had caught their ominous sound.

The anniversary of the October Revolution was approaching, and that meant, as it did every year, that Mother and Dad were very busy. They painted countless slogans in white and gold letters on red bunting: "All Rally to the Defence of the Motherland!" "Hail the Twenty-Fourth Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution!" "We'll Stand by Moscow!" Red streamers, painted with these slogans, lay drying on all the tables and chairs in the house.

Next morning Kolya woke to hear volleys of gun-fire and rumbling sounds pouring from the loudspeaker on the wall.

"It's from the Red Square, Kolya! The parade's on."

Trying days came again. At nights the wind carried the terrifying, muffled roar of enemy guns. The fascists were blindly blazing a path to Moscow with gun-fire. The Dmitrievs had



Enemy Driven Out

carefully packed all the things they needed to take with them. Kolya had a box ready for his crayons and pictures.

Houses were not being heated and it was cold in the flat. Food was scarce; there had not been "something good" for supper for a long time, and tasteless lime-tree blossoms were brewed in place of tea. If either of the children made a face, Mother would say: "None of that, it's perfectly good tea."

"It's beastly," Kolya would grumble.

"There's proper tea at the front for the fighting men to drink—to your health. Don't they deserve the best of everything? You don't want them to be short of good, strong tea, do you?"

Katya, pushing with her chin against the surface of the table as she held the saucer between her lips, noisily sipped the lime-tea. There had been times when Katya had had to be coaxed to eat—"One spoonful for Mummy's sake, one for Daddy's, one for Kolya's." Now she patiently drank a whole saucerful of the unappetizing, pungent beverage, ending by rubbing the tip of her nose against the raised empty saucer. She drank it for those who were fighting so courageously for all good people in Moscow and everywhere to remain alive, healthy and happy for a long, long time—for always.

Asleep one night in the cold, unheated room, with his coat on top of the blanket, Kolya did not hear the announcement coming from the wireless, always switched on in case of an alert. But Mother and Dad jumped up from the table, where they were still working at this late hour, and stood close to the loudspeaker, so that they would not miss a word of the news that for so long they had dreamed of hearing.

"Failure of the German plan for the encirclement and capture of Moscow. Defeat of German troops on the outskirts of Moscow!" The words were solemn, if rather muffled, for the loudspeaker had been covered for the night with a small cushion, so that, if there was an alert, it would not wake the children too abruptly.

Fyodor Nikolayevich was going to say something, but Natalia Nikolayevna, one hand on her heart, put the other one over his mouth. They stood there, side by side, listening to the news which millions of people had been waiting for, news which one longed to hear over and over again. Fyodor Nikolayevich pressed his wife's fingers to his lips, and she knew that he was repeating the words they had just heard over the air. And the announcer seemed to sense this great desire of his listeners—those who had not yet fallen asleep or had been awakened by the great joy—to have the news repeated, and he began to read the announcement over again.

"Latest news. Failure of the German plan for the encirclement and capture of Moscow . . ."

Silently the father and mother tiptoed to the children's room. They stood beside the beds of their sleeping children, the bedclothes huddled almost over their heads, listening to the soft breathing. Fyodor Nikolayevich bent over Kolya, recalling the time, several years before, when Kolya had been seriously ill with croup and he had stood over his little son. The crisis had come during the night, and Kolya, thin and weak from his struggle for life, lay victorious but unconscious of what he had been through. His father and mother had stood at his bedside, still afraid for him, but knowing that death had retreated and feeling that their little son must live . . .

Thousands of other mothers were looking at their sleeping children in the same way and weeping quietly with joy as they whispered: "They will live, they will grow up to be men and women . . ."

"We must wake up Kolya to tell him," Fyodor Nikolayevich said softly.

"Better wait till the morning—don't let's disturb him."

"We must let him share this joy with us. He'll never forgive us afterwards if we don't."

And indeed, years later, Kolya remembered that night in the unheated room, when Dad's and Mother's faces, warm with joy, had at once melted the chill he felt when Dad took him from bed to the sofa below the loudspeaker. Now he listened to the words that were heard and repeated by people in his own street, people all over Moscow, in the country, where Zhenya now lived, and throughout the Soviet land.

He did not shout "Hurrah!" nor jump for joy on the sofa, but stood listening in silence. The cushion was removed from the loudspeaker and the news of the victory of Moscow thundered through the flat. Kolya's gaze wandered from the loudspeaker to his father, then to his mother, and back again to the loudspeaker. The last few months had taught him to keep still, although he was tingling with irrepressible joy. He was no longer the little boy who had shouted "Hurrah!" at midday on June 22nd, when Dad had announced the horrifying news; he had grown several years in the course of six months. And now, standing barefoot on the old sofa, with a blanket flung over his shoulders, he listened to the proclamation of Moscow's victory over German fascism with the earnestness and understanding typical of the city's growing generation.

Chapter 5

FROM THE FIRST POTATO TO THE FIRST SALUTE

But the war was not over yet. When Kolya woke after that memorable night, the room was still cold and he and Mother went to get bread on the ration coupons, just as they had done the day before. Nor was there any news as to how soon Kostya Yermakov would return.

Katya, who was still ignorant of the great events, woke up at last.

"Sleepyhead," Kolya said. "You've slept through the latest news, but I've heard every word of it. Now get up, and you needn't be afraid ever again—the Germans have been chased away from Moscow."

The fascists had, indeed, been driven from Moscow, but the war, although it had ebbed slightly from the city, affected life as much as ever.

The fences round the yards in Plotnikov Street were pulled down, because the palings were wooden and fire-wood was needed; in any case they would have caught fire too easily from incendiary bombs. With the fences removed, anybody could walk right up to the old spreading oak-tree which had been the cause of so many disputes between the children of the two yards. But somehow it gave Kolya no pleasure to slap the thick rugged bark, or even pull himself up on a knotty branch of the tree. There was nobody to tell about the oak-tree being at last common property. Victor, his long-standing foe, had gone; and Zhenya, whom he missed dreadfully, was still in the country. The large grounds of the combined yards looked uninviting and empty.

Besides, one was hungry all the time. When the bread was

brought from the bakery it was divided up to last through the day; Dad would cut the loaf himself, after measuring it as carefully as if he were tracing before making a painting. Every crust seemed delicious. Sugar was so scarce that one evening, when Mum was reading Gogol's *Dead Souls* to the children and came to the place where Sobakevich says: "I wouldn't put a frog into my mouth, even if it was coated with sugar," Katya sighed and said wistfully:

"I would—if there really was sugar on it—I'd bite all round it."

The spring brought a cruel notice to the house—Kostya Yermakov had fallen in battle.

Who would carry *this* message to Klavdia now working in a distant Urals factory?

Kolya went to the piano and struck up "Suliko," which Kostya had often played on his mandolin of an evening in the yard. But the moment the keys sounded the familiar melody Kolya felt sick with pain. He closed the lid softly and went away, moving awkwardly in his haste as far from the piano as he could.

He never touched the piano again.

Mother tried to persuade him to practise and not to neglect his gift for music.

"Please don't, Mum!" was all he would say. Something in his voice made her let him alone.

He did not give much attention to his drawing either. Sometimes he would go to his favourite corner and sit down with drawing-pad and crayons; he would try to draw explosions, or dark-green aeroplanes with crosses on their fuselage, and behind them a trail of fire and smoke. But usually he would put the drawing aside, for he never seemed to be able to get down

on paper what he longed so intensely to express. After one of these attempts he would not pick up a pencil again for days.

Now he was eager to do something, however simple, that would help grown-up people in their work, and once he tried to make Dad a frame for stretching material. Fyodor Nikolayevich heard him pottering and hammering in the passage; it seemed as if things were going well, and he began to hum his favourite song about Budyonny's great cavalry charge. Then there was a dull thud of the hammer, followed by complete silence. When his father looked out, Kolya was sucking his thumb.

"It doesn't hurt, I've got to learn to hammer in nails—I will learn . . ."

In summer, Kolya had some real work to learn, work in the allotment garden at Mamontovka Village, not far from Moscow.

The family moved there in a lorry. Kolya coaxed his parents to let him sit on top of the furniture they were taking with them—among chairs with their legs sticking up, basins tied in table-cloths, pots and pans.

The lorry rolled along Yaroslavl Highway and Kolya, sitting on top, was on a level with tram and trolley-bus roofs. He saw the poles drawing showers of sparks from the wires above his head; he could see the insides of passing lorries and the shining tops of motor cars, with slanting cloud reflections on them.

Country air blew into his face.

They were passing the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition which Kolya and Katya had often visited with their parents. The grounds looked dead and bleak; the black muzzles of ack-ack guns pointing upward seemed flushed and sinister in the sunset glow.

Outlined against the flaming sky, straining towards some

glorious aim, proud and indomitable, were two steel figures of a worker and a peasant woman holding high over their heads a hammer and a sickle.

Kolya had often looked up at these two statues by the sculptress Mukhina. He had seen them on the cinema screen, on magazine covers and on match-boxes. But never had they seemed so magnificent as they did now, with the vigilant guns behind them, and the huge fish-like barrage balloons protecting Moscow, the great city which had raised in sight of the whole world the banner of labour—free, inspiring labour, symbolized by the worker's hammer and the peasant's sickle.

When they arrived in Mamontovka and set off for the allotments, Kolya was impatient to start work.

Moving away from the others, he picked up a clod of earth, rolling it between his fingers and squeezing it. This was a bit of the same soil on which towns and the guns defending them stood, on which the Soviet people lived, and which gave good bread in exchange for toil. Then, seeing his father looking curiously at him, he threw down the clod in embarrassment, rubbing his hands clean.

The work turned out to be hard, dirty, and nothing like what Kolya had imagined. His back ached, his head swam, his shoulders were cramped, his city-bred hands burned with blisters. The allotment was not big but there was plenty of work to do. As neither Dad nor Mother had had much experience of farming—this was the first time either of them planted potatoes—things did not go very well at first. But Dad, who, as he said, always liked to get to the root of things, bought some booklets, consulted an agricultural expert, and was soon explaining to everyone how necessary it was to loosen the soil round the potato roots. Potatoes, it seemed, had a way of

sprouting underground, and these sprouts or runners were always trying to force their way to the light; if they managed to do this, they would come as leaves, which were no use to anyone. So you had to dig round the roots and drive the runners underground again.

Fyodor Nikolayevich made it all sound very interesting, and once Kolya understood the reason for digging, he tried hard not to lag behind. "Isn't Dad smart!" he cried, echoing Mother's words. "He always gets to the roots of things, and this time it's really the roots he's got to, isn't it, Mum?"

The farther the front-lines rolled away from Moscow, the more life returned to something like normal. Although the street lamps were still unlit, although every window remained blacked out, and in every family there was anxiety for men fighting at the battle-lines, Moscow, having driven back the foe, began to remove the sand-bags from shop windows and to tear down barricades on the outskirts.

Severe military order was still maintained in the capital, but the city was no longer the silent, alert military camp which it had been in the late autumn of 1941.

Across continents and seas resounded the glory of Stalingrad, glory such as the world had never known.

People were gradually coming back from the interior of the country to their Moscow homes, and at last Zhenya Striganov returned to the house in Plotnikov Street. He had grown a lot and toughened a little during the last year; shaking his hand Kolya noticed how broad it had grown.

"Hullo, Kolya," Zhenya said. "How are things? What have you been doing with yourself? Still messing with paints and

pencils? You must show me what you've done. I've been working at a machine and tractor station, overhauling agricultural machines. Do you know how many mower-machine units a "Kharkov" tractor can pull at a time? . . . I think not. What about Stalingrad? You know what's happened there and about all the prisoners we took—three hundred twenty thousand prisoners, what do you think of that?"

He was the same old Zhenya who knew so much more than anyone else and remembered so many figures by heart—the number of planes brought down, the number of prisoners taken. And no sooner was he back than he had the first say in everything again; it was as if he had never been away.

And now that the yards were all unfenced and thrown together, Zhenya became captain of the boys of five yards, although Kolya, who had learned so much and had gone through a good deal in Moscow, had cherished a secret hope that the leadership might now pass to him.

However, Kolya did not take these things too much to heart, for the yard had lost a good deal of its fascination. Kolya was now a "Form A pupil" at the Kiev District School No. 61. This was a real school, not just a music school, like the one Mother had taken him to before the war. It was good to be a schoolboy, with the school gates closing behind you every morning and cutting you off from all commonplace things pertaining to the house or even the yard. For in the yard, no matter what you did, you always knew that Mother might be watching from the window.

School now became all-important to Kolya. From now on, the people with most influence over his life were the teachers, and foremost among them was Elizaveta Leonidovna, his form-mistress.

Actually he began by being slightly afraid of her. He knew he would be having lessons with her every day for four years, and he felt that someone who could teach all that must know everything there was to know in the world. Besides she had the remarkable faculty of bringing silence with her wherever she went. At lessons Kolya was all attention, sitting perfectly still—"with his eyes and his mouth wide open," teased Dad. But gradually he got used to school, and then drawings, which certainly had nothing to do with either arithmetic or grammar, began to appear on the covers and pages of his exercise-books. Some of these were pictures of tanks and aeroplanes, or of explosions looking like trees with curly crowns and flaming fruits.

The climax came one day when they were doing sums and the teacher caught sight of a picture of herself on the inside cover of Kolya's exercise-book. It was by no means an accurate portrait, but it would have been useless to pretend it was meant to be someone else, for Kolya had caught the likeness all right.

Kolya's parents were called to school, and he was ordered to stop playing havoc with his exercise-books. The incident affected him greatly—even at home he did not touch his pencil for three days. But after that he took to it once more with renewed enthusiasm.

That summer again the family went to Mamontovka.

Not far from the settlement where the Dmitrievs lived, across an open field, there was a high fence with barbed wire entanglements over it, shutting off a plot of land from curious eyes. But not from ears, for a constant heavy rumbling could



III

A Portrait of Katya

be heard from the enclosure. The earth shook as if something huge was struggling to break loose and tear the fences down.

Very soon the boys of the neighbourhood, who somehow managed to fall on the scent of things before anyone else, discovered that there were tanks inside the enclosure. One day Kolya found a chink in the fence and was peeping through it, when he was seized firmly but not too painfully by his ears and pulled away. Then one ear was released and by the other he was slowly turned round to face a sturdily built officer of medium height, on whose green front-line shoulder-straps were the brass insignia of a tank regiment.

"You weren't getting a very good view, were you?" asked the officer.

Kolya turned red, but said nothing.

"And why weren't you getting a good view, do you think?"

"Don't know," Kolya mumbled. "The hole's too small."

"I don't think so. It's because you've no business to be looking. What's the good of having a fence round the place if we can't keep curious people from prowling about . . . Where are you from, anyway?"

Kolya explained that he lived in Moscow but that he had come to the country with his parents for the summer and was helping in the vegetable garden. It occurred to him that he might tell the officer he knew something about tanks, and had actually been drawing them for some time. But he said nothing. There were days when he seemed to have lost interest in drawing. But in fact he had reached the age when children who have made a hobby of any form of art may suddenly abandon it, showing a new critical attitude to themselves. This is when it becomes clear whether a child has some special ability which by great effort may later grow into talent, or whether his past

attempts have been only an expression of the child's heightened sensibility, his joy in living and delight in the sounds, colours, words and movements which fill his world.

Kolya was silent. But the officer had apparently taken at once to the serious, blue-eyed boy with sun-bleached hair. He saw Kolya to his home and on the way they talked. The officer asked about Kolya's school and was interested to hear of his parent's work.

"I had a class of youngsters like you," he said gravely and unexpectedly. "I was a teacher before the war!"

Kolya started and even recoiled a little. In his eyes, as in the eyes of all junior pupils, teachers were beings in a world apart—powerful beings of whom one had better beware, for conversations with them would sometimes have unforeseen results. But as it was clear that this particular teacher could have no connection with Kolya's school, he ventured the question:

"Were you strict?"

"There certainly was good order in the school where I taught—absolute silence during lessons." The officer shook his fist and tried to look severe. "But to tell you the truth, Kolya, I'd give anything now to hear the boys shouting—I'd let them shout at the top of their voices as long as they liked."

Soon Kolya discovered that his new friend was not a tank-man at all but the commander of a self-propelled gun battery. When Fyodor Nikolayevich, somewhat taken aback, met them on the porch, the officer introduced himself:

"Senior Lieutenant Gorbach, Victor Ivanovich, in command of a battery. How d'you do? . . . Sorry to intrude, but I brought along your boy here," he explained with a grin. "He's been spying where he had no business to, and on top of that he's

annoyed because he wasn't getting a good view . . . Nice place you've got here, quite cosy." He glanced round the small neat cottage where the Dmitrievs lived. "And how goes the gardening?"

The lieutenant had an easy, friendly manner that made everybody like him. He was obviously in no hurry to go; he stayed to tea without any coaxing from Natalia Nikolayevna.

Kolya gazed steadily at the visitor who was sipping his tea slowly and methodically. It wasn't often you had the chance to sit drinking tea with an army man, and an officer at that.

"Before the war I taught in a Stalingrad school," Victor Ivanovich was saying. "Had to deal with chaps like your own boy . . ." He nodded towards Kolya, whose eyes glowed with admiration at the very mention of Stalingrad. "Children are golden clay in our hands! I've got a son and daughter too—they're out in the Urals now. In Stalingrad there's nothing left of our belongings, not a thing. We were very comfortable there, had a nice flat—cosy, just as it is here." He glanced approvingly round the room. "Now everything I have in the world I carry about with me."

Kolya felt terribly unhappy for the stocky, sun-tanned officer with the broad cheek-bones. If he had nothing, no home, no bed, how on earth was he going to live?

But the lieutenant did not seem worried. Having drunk no fewer than four glasses of tea, he polished off a plate of new potatoes, which he pronounced to be quite a treat. Then, promising Kolya a ride on a self-propelled gun, he thanked the Dmitrievs for their hospitality and went off, leaving behind an aroma of new leather straps and petrol.

The officer was as good as his word. He came next day and, with both Kolya and Katya on his knees, took them for a ride

on a gun, its fast, caterpillar tracks spreading like a carpet being endlessly unrolled.

They saw quite a lot of him after that; he seemed to be attracted by the atmosphere of their home and the presence of children. Katya, too, became attached to Lieutenant Gorbach, particularly after he had presented her with a pretty little glazed pot, somehow chubby-cheeked as if it were smiling. Kolya got two gifts: a compass and a flash-light with alternate red, green and white lights.

They spent many an evening listening to Lieutenant Gorbach telling exciting tales about the war. But best of all their new friend liked to talk of Stalingrad, his home town. He had grown up in Stalingrad, had been educated and had started on his teaching career there.

"You can just imagine what it was like when our two fronts closed in a circle round the fascists' rear!" He would take out a map and with expressive gestures of his sun-tanned hands would show the movement of troops, and where the main blows had been directed. "What a trap they fell into!"

Once Lieutenant Gorbach brought a torn, half-charred sheet of paper and flung it on the table.

"For a long time I've meant to show you this," he said smiling. "We came across it in Stalingrad in a German officers' dug-out. They're quite common, these things, and I thought it would interest you as artists. It's a drawing from Hitler's sketch-book. You know it was his dream to become an artist? They say he studied art and tried to make a career of it, but he was absolutely no good; then, as you know, he decided to seek fame and fortune as führer. But the hurt still rankles, and to soothe the führer's wounded vanity the German Ministry of Propaganda sets about publishing richly-bound books of

his drawings. I saw a good many of them—they were so rotten they made my stomach turn. Before I toss this specimen into the waste-paper basket, I thought you might be interested in having a look at it. Well, what do you think? It's supposed to be a water-colour. 'Gaze upon the splotch and blotch . . . ' as Gogol said. And may the painter go straight to hell."

They all bent over the sheet of paper, Kolya pushing his head under the elbows of the grown-ups to get a better view.

It was a coloured print, one of its edges burnt, and with a kind of grim stubbornness it showed a collection of ruins. There were heaps of rubble, charred walls of crumbling buildings, trampled, fire-blackened fields with shrivelled bushes here and there; flames rose against a dark sky. The print was marked by an over-emphasis of line and screaming, hysterical colours. The scene had no emotional effect on the spectator; doubtless it had had none on the painter either.

The paper was glossy and of good quality. It must be smooth to the touch, thought Kolya, but he would not lay a finger on it, for it seemed sullied by the hands of the most detestable man in the world.

"He can't paint," said Mother. "But what vanity!"

"No talent and not a single idea," added Fyodor Nikolayevich. "Plenty of daubing, but what does he want to say? No wonder, on all his pictures his eyes have a glassy stare. If they fell on anything fine or beautiful, they just wouldn't take it in."

Kolya watched as Lieutenant Gorbach tore the print into small pieces. He had listened attentively to the judgement pronounced by Mother and Dad, who obviously knew what they were talking about.

"He can't beat us in battle," he thought. "And as far as

painting is concerned, we've got artists who can leave him standing."

Kolya felt proud of his native land, which had such gallant soldiers to defend it and such fine artists to paint its pictures. The fascists and their führer hadn't a chance—neither in war nor in art. They had attacked and they would pay for it. Now Kolya understood why Hitler had ordered the Tretyakov Art Gallery to be burned. He was jealous, jealous of all the fine pictures painted by Russians and belonging to the Soviet land. So they had had to move the pictures from Moscow, and Kolya had not yet had a chance to see them.

On a hot midsummer day Lieutenant Gorbach came to say a hurried good-bye to the Dmitrievs. His battery had been urgently ordered to the battle-lines.

"Which part of the front will you be going to?" Fyodor Nikolayevich asked softly as he was seeing him off.

The lieutenant shrugged an evasive answer.

Kolya was sorry to see the lieutenant leave. Here was another older friend taken from him by the war. A desolate silence reigned over the grounds beyond the fence, where Kolya had first met Lieutenant Gorbach. The guns had rolled away, leaving deep caterpillar tracks on the dusty road. The stalwart gunners were no longer to be seen strolling up and down the station platform at Mamontovka.

A quiet fell over Mamontovka. But in the sketch-book of Kolya Dmitriev, now a budding gardener, high-speed tanks and self-propelled guns with red stars on them blazed towards the enemy or forded great deep rivers.

One day Kolya reminded Dad of a promise he had made but which he hadn't yet kept.

For a long time Kolya had wanted to see the very first ray

of the rising sun. He tried hard to get up in time, even tying his big toe to the bedpost so that he would wake each time he turned. But always it happened so that the sun was up first; somehow it managed to rise from behind the horizon before Kolya could get out from under the bed-clothes.

Dad had promised that one morning he would wake Kolya so that he would not fail to get a glimpse of the sun's first ray.

At last the morning was fixed, and they all went to bed a little earlier than usual. But about midnight, when Kolya was asleep, Fyodor Nikolayevich woke Natalia Nikolayevna. From the loudspeaker which had not been switched off came the announcement: "Attention! Important news will be broadcast in half an hour."

In something like half an hour there was a slight crackling in the loudspeaker and the same voice said again: "Important news will be broadcast in half an hour."

The minutes dragged slowly but hearts were beating fast. At last the loudspeaker came to life again. From Moscow, through the warm dusk of that July night, over the guns still pointing vigilantly upwards above the slumbering suburban settlements, came the news that brought a joyful awakening to those who had gone to sleep, exhausted, only an hour or two ago: "The Soviet army had recaptured Orel and Belgorod from the enemy." The announcer went on to say that Moscow, capital of the U.S.S.R., would fire a salute that night in honour of the gallant troops who had delivered Orel and Belgorod.

Kolya and Katya were wakened. Katya kept closing her eyes again and trying to poke her head back into the pillow. But Kolya jumped up like a jack-in-the-box. "Is it sunrise already?"

They went out on the porch. Kolya had flung Dad's coat over

his shoulders, but the cold night air seeped under his shirt, chilling his body that was still heavy and drowsy.

Everybody was wide awake, it seemed. Doors, wicket-gates and shutters clattered, and people called to each other in the darkness.

"Where are you looking, Kolya?"

"Over there, Dad. That's where the sun's supposed to rise—checked it by my compass yesterday."

"My dear boy! We didn't get you out of bed to watch the sunrise. Hasn't Mother told you or were you too sleepy to understand? Orel and Belgorod have been recaptured. That means the fighting at the Kursk salient has ended in complete victory for our troops."

"Is Lieutenant Gorbach there, do you think?"

"Quite possibly. And now an artillery salute will be fired in Moscow. Look over there."

In the dark, Kolya's father turned the boy's head in the direction where, beyond the woods, the faint gleam of the late summer sunset could still be seen. The whole of that part of the sky was suddenly illuminated as if it had been struck by a hundred flashes of lightning. Clouds seemed to waft upwards, leaving a frayed fringe of scarlet, and in a few moments there was a muffled rumbling. Then again the horizon flared red; greenish gleams rose high and glimmered for a while before the sky grew white, and once more a powerful, continuous rumbling rolled through the air.

Again and again this was repeated as Moscow saluted with her gun volleys and rockets those who had routed Hitler's armoured forces, which had bitten so deeply into the land. Moscow was most likely saluting, among others, the school-master Gorbach and his gunners.

Next morning Kolya again woke too late to see the sun's first ray. But he knew that the night before he had seen something far more important. Standing on the porch of the little cottage in Mamontovka, while windows and doors rattled with each volley of the salute, he had seen one of the mighty rays of the rising sun of victory.

Chapter 6

UNDER THE OLD OAK-TREE

The whole family was pleased when a letter at last arrived from Lieutenant Gorbach, thanking them all for the "kindness and friendliness" shown to him. "We go to battle in great spirits," he went on. "It is a joy to liberate towns and villages and our people from the robbers and murderers whom we are driving to the west, continually, without a moment's lull. The news reports are most stimulating. The Donbas is ours again, and Italy has capitulated. The fascists' end draws near."

Kolya read the letter at least ten times. Then he took it to the yard and read it to Zhenya and other boys gathered round the bench under the old oak-tree. All the boys looked in awe at the small triangular envelope with the sender's address in the school-master's neat hand: "Lieutenant V. I. Gorbach, Field Post 77 136."

In the autumn Victor Lanevsky came home. It seemed that in the Urals town where he had lived he had been discovered to have the gift of elocution, and he had attended a class on the subject. So now, even when he was speaking about the most ordinary things, he would move his lips in a funny sort of way as if he were tracing designs in the air. "This is what is called

articulation," he explained. Zhenya felt quite sorry for Victor having to take so much trouble over his own mouth.

Victor did not seem to have learned much in those trying days when he had been away from Moscow. He was the same old Victor, always bragging about the things he did, and how everyone in the Urals had been amazed to find him so cultured and intelligent. From what he said, it appeared he had been on friendly terms with all the celebrated actors in the town where he lived, and had had free seats for all the performances, in short, he had done his best to have a really good time. And now, whenever the boys of the yard met under the oak-tree (now the gathering place of children from five yards), before anyone else had a chance to say a word, Victor insisted on giving a recitation.

"Wait a minute, boys," he would say. "What's the use of just babbling. Now suppose I give you a reading of something I recited at an evening entertainment we gave at the City Theatre for servicemen. They lapped it up, I tell you!"

And Victor, taking up a position under the oak-tree, and going through strange motions with his lips, would begin: "In the mountains, among the dark ravines . . ."

Strangely enough Zhenya Striganov, the very same Zhenya who had formerly despised Victor, calling him "Castor Oil" and other nicknames, was now making up to him. It pleased him to have Victor get free passes to the cinema or the theatre and ring up film stars.

Kolya felt that Zhenya was beginning to treat him like a little boy, with whom it was all very well to have some fun in the yard, but who was too small for anything serious. Zhenya had grown rapidly in the past few years. The difference in their ages was now more noticeable and it told on their re-



An Illustration to Pushkin's *Dubrovsky*

lationship. Zhenya's plans for the future were clear and simple: in a few years he would join a vocational school and train as a turner. He seldom spoke of these plans, but when he did, it was with assurance as of a matter decided and settled.

What had Kolya to say for himself that would be of interest to Victor, who had associated with celebrities, or to Zhenya, about to embark confidently on a life of real labour. Kolya had long ceased to entertain the boys in the yard with "thought-ups." He now read a good deal and used his imagination to draw parallels between what he read and the great grim events in the country, which continued to affect the life around him. He found it difficult to put all this into words and still more difficult to express himself on the pages of his sketch-book. This was a time when Kolya preferred not to show his drawings to anyone.

But when they began to make up the school wall newspaper, Kolya offered to help. The senior pupils at first looked askance, wondering what a small boy like that could do. To everyone's astonishment, however, he drew a splendid picture for the headline of red banners unfurled over the school's globe against the background of a battle scene showing an array of tanks with blazing red stars. The wall newspaper was a great success. When Yura Gaiburov, the Young Pioneer leader, saw the drawings illustrating it, he asked: "Have any of the teachers helped you with the paper, boys?" He was amazed to hear that the drawings had been done by a boy in the third form.

"Why don't you join the Young Pioneers?" he asked Kolya. "You're a good scholar and I see you're active in school work. Think it over."

"I've been thinking it over for a long time."

With all his heart he wanted to join. He envied the children

who wore red Pioneer ties and he kept drawing in his exercise-books the Young Pioneer's badge of the time—a red flag with the hammer and sickle on it and the words "Always Ready"—the Pioneers' motto. For a long time he had felt that he was ready to join the ranks of the dependable, friendly fellows who wore red ties and engaged in the most interesting activities. But Kolya was extremely shy, blushed easily, and at first gave the impression of being timid and reticent. He had not applied for membership, and somehow nobody asked him to join. But now the Young Pioneer leader himself had broached the subject and Kolya responded readily.

The step was timely, for friendships formed in the yard were slowly breaking up; Kolya could not go Victor's way, while Zhenya, drifting away from Kolya, had become one of Victor's hangers-on. And now Kolya felt he no longer had any authority even with Katya. She had started school in autumn, and for the first few days she was willing enough to listen to Kolya telling her how to behave if she wanted to get on well with her class-mates, what to do when she was being teased and how to clench her hand to make her fist strike hard. But Mother, hearing him, came into the room and said:

"Kolya, stop! Katya doesn't need your advice—girls know better than boys how to behave at school, and I won't have her head stuffed with nonsense."

So he was talking nonsense, was he? Well, just wait till they discovered Katya was not getting on well in her form—then they'll come begging him to set things right. "No," he'd say politely but firmly, "if you'd listened to me in the first place this would never have happened. After all, I'm in the third form—I've got some experience."

The first few days it was amusing to watch Katya, when she

came home from school, setting all her dolls and teddy-bears on a bench, placing in front of them a box with sheets of paper on it, and saying:

“Good morning, children. You are now schoolboys and schoolgirls. Remember, when I come into the classroom, you must all stand up.”

When all was said and done, Katya was no longer Figgimigigit or Simarik-Barbarik, as Kolya used to call her. She was now a first-form pupil of School No. 70, and as such, could no longer be patronized by her elder brother.

But Kolya, the Young Pioneer, would again have to be acknowledged by Katya as her superior.

To be a Young Pioneer meant a good deal. It was not simply that Kolya now wore a red Pioneer tie and gave the Pioneer salute. That right he had proudly gained from the moment when, burning with a kind of excitement that he had never known before, he pronounced in a clear ringing voice: “I, a Young Pioneer of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics . . .” Giving a salute above his head, he had then turned his burning face to the scarlet banner and taken a solemn oath to live and study in such a way as to be always ready to fight for the great cause for which Lenin had fought. It meant, as Yura Gaiburov had explained, that from now on Kolya was one of the many holding together the unbreakable ranks of the Young Pioneers who were the youthful followers of Lenin. He was now one of the brotherhood of the foremost and best boys and girls of the Fatherland. When Kolya took the red Pioneer tie from Yura Gaiburov and tied it round his neck, he felt that he carried on his chest a little tongue of the great flame lit over the world by Lenin and kept burning by the untiring efforts and glorious deeds of the people, who were loyal to the Com-

munist Party. It was as if his heart was touched by the red little tongue of sacred flame.

How well Yura could explain to Kolya and other boys of his age what the tasks of the Young Pioneers were. No wonder he was so highly thought of by everybody in the school.

"He can talk as well as a school-master, but he's one of ourselves," the boys said of him.

Yura knew thrilling stories about animals and hunters, knew all the best films, the names of the most prominent football players, all about the life of ants, bees, and other insects, the tonnage of the world's biggest liners, the names of all the boxing champions, world automobile and aviation records. He could answer almost any question on interplanetary flight, could solve in a moment the most difficult cross-word puzzles, and tell the footprints of almost any animal. He knew ever so many songs by heart, ranging from the old Russian song "From the land of far away, from the wide Volga-Mother way" to new war-time songs like "Rostov-City, Rostov-Don" or "Baron von der Pshik." And, amazingly, he always sang the words of the song to the last line, when everybody else could only hum the tune.

All this Yura Gaiburov kept in his handsome curly head, for although he was a senior, he had not outgrown the interests which are born in most of us at the age of twelve and which in later life are too often lost by grown-ups as they become engrossed in more serious affairs.

But, of course, there were other things that earned Yura Gaiburov the admiration and affection of the boys at school. Better than anyone else, he could make you understand words whose meaning is often belittled because they are used so often and sometimes casually. For example, when Yura said "October Revolution" quietly, it seemed to the boys that they were

hearing these familiar words for the first time. New depths of meaning were revealed to them, and they heard the distant rolling echo of the cruiser *Aurora's* guns. "Lenin teaches . . ." Yura would say—and with the words a warm glow seemed to come from his whole being. "Our great Motherland," said Yura—and the ring of the words brought home to the boys the tremendous breadth of their native land.

"Now that I'm a member of the Young Pioneers, what am I supposed to do?" Kolya asked him the day after he had joined.

"What are you supposed to do? First of all study well . . . Wait a minute—you can draw, can't you?"

Kolya reddened.

"Well, you can help with that. You think drawing isn't Pioneer work, but you're wrong—it most assuredly is. By the way, why don't you let me look at your drawings?"

And to Yura Kolya decided to show a batch of the drawings he did at home.

Yura whistled in astonishment.

"Listen, old chap, you've got a gift. I know, for I used to play around with paints myself when I was in the fourth form. Nothing came of it, but I think I can tell a good drawing from a bad one. I'm serious—don't drop it. I can see you've got imagination and a good eye—to tell the truth, I didn't expect anything so good. D'you know what I'm going to tell you: regard drawing as your special Young Pioneer task, Kolya."

Kolya felt greatly encouraged. Again he took to drawing and every day he spent more and more time on it. For some reason—perhaps out of shyness or because he did not wish his parents to notice his fresh interest in painting—he said nothing at home about his talk with the Pioneer leader. But he asked his mother for some money to buy water-colours and she promised

to let him have it. Meanwhile he was busy making pencil sketches from his window. He thought he would like to draw the porch in the next-door yard, which he could see clearly now that the fence had been removed, and the old oak-tree with which so many memories were linked. He gazed intently at the curves of the scraggy branches, bare now, but with signs of life in them still, and noted the direction of the shadows at different hours. With every drawing he seemed to find something new in the familiar tree, something which had evaded him the previous day but was now there.

One day Victor, catching sight of Kolya drawing the old tree from the window, shouted up to him:

“Why do you keep at it like that? It’s not your oak, and you know it—it grows on our side.”

To annoy Kolya and to spoil his view, Victor took down some washing which was hanging in the yard and put it on a string attached at one end to a branch of the oak. Kolya only laughed and tried to get into his drawing the fantastic shapes of the wind-blown garments.

He longed to make a coloured painting of the oak-tree and was happy when he was able to buy a box of paints.

After choosing the paints with Dad, who then went on straight to work, Kolya walked home, happy in the possession of the flat wooden box with a gay label on its lid. The box contained sixteen squares of colour, some little china saucers, and a small tin to hold water. This was the first time Kolya had had such a fine box of paints of his own. Seeing how hard the boy worked at his drawing, Dad had not grudged the money and had bought the best paints obtainable, along with three brushes made of real squirrel hair.

Kolya, hurrying home, looked forward to making himself

comfortable at the window, filling the small tin with water, trying the brushes, dipping each into the candy-like square in turn, and putting the colours on paper, strip by strip, as in a spectrum. Purring, curious Vaksa would come up, rub herself against his knee and against the legs of the chair, and Kolya would dry his brush against her black hair.

His thoughts were interrupted by a flat smack on the back of his neck. He felt something soft and cold, and then icy water ran down his back. He turned and a second hard snowball hit him on his left brow, plastering up his eye. This was followed by a derisive whistling, and a falsetto voice crying: "Ba, ba, rotten painter. Get it in the neck!" Another snowball flew into the air and it hit Kolya's ski-cap.

With his unplastered eye he caught sight of two boys from the next-door yard, who had lately been hanging round Victor. Victor must have egged them on to attack him, and by rights Kolya should have given chase till he caught at least one of them and stuck his nose in the nearest snow-drift. But this would have meant putting down his box of paints somewhere, and he wasn't going to risk a treasure like that. He bit his lips, but out of pride he neither ducked nor shielded himself with his hands from the snowballs flying at him. He merely quickened his step, walking nearer the fence, which gave him some protection, and soon he was able to slip through the wicket-gate. He heard the boys call him names and again he longed to give it to them good and proper. But the flat box of paints, pressed against his chest, and all it represented, made Kolya think better of it; all the same his back was tingling with shame at having run away.

That evening when Dad was ready to answer Kolya's questions, he asked:

“What do you think is more important, Dad—painting or honour?”

Of course he had to tell Dad all that had happened.

“In the first place, son,” said Dad, “it’s not right to compare the two. There are some wrong ideas of what is honourable. You know, for example, that to uphold the honour of the uniform was once set above everything, even above truth. Art and painting have their own honour to uphold. Every artist sees his art as an honourable mission, a way of conveying the living truth, and he can’t deal in half measures. Do you understand, Kolya? Truth makes strong demands on us. In this case you held the truth in your hand; it was there in the box with the paints. Should you have sacrificed it by going off to fight a couple of fools?”

“Wait till I catch them. I’ll give it to them yet, Dad.”

“We’ll see about that. Meanwhile, go to sleep.”

“Dad, may I ask just one more question?”

“It’s late—you’d better sleep.”

“Just one question—it’s very important. Victor teases me because I keep drawing the same oak over and over again. And he’s made Zhenya laugh at me, too. They say: ‘The oak’s old, it’s not gold. You can draw it and rub it and all you’ll get is a hole in it.’”

“Just a minute,” said Dad, and brought a magazine over to Kolya. In it was a picture of two horses harnessed to a carriage.

“Look, this is a picture by Serov. There are two horses and a single harness. If one horse pulls more strongly than the other, the carriage will be sent to one side of the road. What is important is that they should both pull together with equal effort and in the same direction. Suppose we label

one horse talent or ability and the other perseverance, will-power, diligence—and let the carriage represent a man. Now if talent pulls while perseverance has its reins loosened, the man will not advance even slowly—he will go off to one side or whirl round the same place. And things will be no better if talent doesn't pull—he won't go far on perseverance alone. I want you to keep this example before you always. Now sleep."

When he woke in the morning, Kolya saw that Dad had pinned Serov's picture of the two horses on the wall above his head.

Again and again Kolya drew the snow-swept porch and the corner of the yard where the old oak stood.

One day, when Fyodor Nikolayevich was painting at home and the children were playing in the yard, Katya ran into his room, red and tearful.

"Daddy! They're cutting down the oak-tree!" she screamed and rushed out again.

Fyodor Nikolayevich threw on his overcoat. As he opened the front door, he heard excited childish voices and the plaintive singing of a saw.

In the yard, youngsters from the whole neighbourhood—including Zhenya and Victor—crowded round the oak-tree. The news that the oak was being sawed down must have spread like wildfire. And little boys came running from every direction to see what could be done to save their beloved tree. Two big, glum-looking men knelt in the snow near the tree and kept working away with a two-handed saw, paying no attention to the shrieks and protests of the children. "Zig-zag . . . zig-zag . . ." whined the saw teasingly.

"Stop that! . . . Leave the tree alone! . . . Get out before we kick you out . . . The house-manager didn't give you permission to saw the tree . . . You've no right to do it . . ." came from all sides.

The circle of children moved closer and closer to the men. The toothed edge of the saw went deeper and deeper into the tree trunk. Zhenya tried to catch hold of one of the handles of the saw.

"None of that, now!" one of the men muttered angrily. He reached out for Zhenya's arm and wrenched away the saw handle so roughly, that Zhenya was sent flying. "None of that," repeated the man. "Go and play, and don't interfere in other people's business. We've got our orders—we're felling withered trees in all the yards. No nonsense now, d'you hear?"

"Who says the oak's withered? It's alive and growing," the children cried.

Kolya stepped out resolutely from the crowd. Pale with indignation, he looked the shouting man full in the face.

"Show us your orders," he said, "let's see them in writing. You know the law is that only withered trees are to be felled. And anyone can see this tree's alive. You've no right to saw it down, I tell you, no right at all!"

Carelessly pushing Kolya aside, the man bent to the saw, which sank its teeth into the body of the old oak, sprinkling fresh, dark-golden sawdust on the snow.

"Shut up!" said the man. "Anyone can see it's withered."

"I tell you it isn't," persisted Kolya, now on the verge of tears. "You may take my word for it—I'm a Young Pioneer and I'm not in the habit of telling lies." He tore open his coat, showing the red Pioneer tie he wore.

"Prove it!" the man snarled.

This gave Katya an idea. She slipped out of the crowd of children and disappeared from the yard. The next minute she was back, waving a sheaf of papers. Kolya looked at the papers and froze to the spot. She had brought his own drawings—all the different drawings he had made of the corner of the yard, the porch and the old oak.

“There, Kolya, prove it to him!” cried Katya, pushing a drawing first at her brother, and then under the nose of the men with the saw. “You can see the tree’s got leaves all over it. There are acorns, too, so how can it be withered? Kolya didn’t have any paint in summer, so he had to do it in pencil, but all the same you can see it’s not a dead tree. It’s in full leaf, alive and growing!”

Even Victor deigned to confirm this.

“To anyone with brains,” he began, twisting and protruding his lips to add weight to his words, “it is clear, that the tree’s not withering, that is to say, it grows. And the drawings here prove it.”

The children had got hold of the drawings, showing the old oak with a thick crown of foliage, and were flourishing them at the wood-cutters.

The men were rather put out, never having expected to meet such opposition. They had counted on cutting for fire-wood an old unregistered oak, and now it appeared that the tree had actually found its way on to paper.

“What are you sticking pictures under my nose for?” asked the one who had pushed Zhenya out of the way. “D’you think I’ve never seen pictures in my life? You wait I’ll make a pretty picture of you. We don’t care what the tree was like in the summer—take it from me—it’s dead now, frozen and dried up.”

"You're dried up yourself!" shouted Zhenya, unable to contain himself now that help was coming in the person of Fyodor Nikolayevich.

Fyodor Nikolayevich, considerate and courteous as usual, made his way through the circle of children and went up to the wood-cutters.

"Be so good as to show me your permit," said Fyodor Nikolayevich. "You have one, no doubt?"

The men reluctantly got to their feet, leaving the saw in the tree. Zhenya and Kolya, seeing their chance, hastened to draw the saw from the wound in the old oak. Fyodor Nikolayevich read carefully the paper which the men showed him. It was clear that they had no right to fell anything but dead wood, which the oak was not, for it had foliage, yielding a cool shade in summer. Fyodor Nikolayevich announced his readiness to go with the wood-cutters to the place where the permit had been issued; there he would stand up for the tree's rights. The men now realized that they were in for some trouble, but the one who seemed to be the more communicative of the two said: "All right, we'll go and clear up matters, if you like." Lifting up the saw, he made for the gate, adding with a growl: "You seem to have plenty of time to waste."

His taciturn companion followed him.

"Very well, let's go," agreed Fyodor Nikolayevich.

"Let's go, Dad, do let's!" insisted Kolya, wildly excited.

And everybody—Kolya, Zhenya, Victor, all the boys from the yard—moved in a body towards the gate, escorting the wood-cutters and calling: "We're going too! We'll prove it to you! . . . We won't let you kill our tree! There's no Soviet law saying you can cut down living trees!"

In the gateway, letting his silent companion pass through



A Moscow Street. Water-colour

in front of him, the more talkative wood-cutter stopped, shifting his feet uneasily. Then, turning to Fyodor Nikolayevich, he said:

"To hell with all of you! We've no time to go to offices—we've got to make the rounds of plenty more yards. If you've the time to go, go yourself. But your oak's done for, all the same. Wait till summer comes round, and you'll see!"

The children responded with a joyous whistling and a general hum of triumph before they rushed back to see if serious injury had been done to the old oak. The cut was deep indeed; the saw had penetrated through the thickness of the bark into the wood itself. They decided to put a plaster over the cut, tie it round with rags—and patiently wait for summer.

A little embarrassed, Kolya gathered up his drawings, which had passed from hand to hand. He listened in silence to a good deal of praise and went home with burning ears, very pleased with the way things had turned out.

"Another time you better not take my drawings without asking me first," he said to his sister, just to keep Katya in her place.

In early spring when it was getting warm, and the oak-tree, impatiently watched by the whole yard, still stood leafless, with its trunk bandaged, Stepan Porfiryevich Striganov, Zhenya's father, came back from the front. The moment he heard this, Kolya rushed off to the Striganovs to congratulate his old friend on his safe arrival.

Stepan Porfiryevich was sitting at the table drinking tea. He had on a faded private's tunic with green active-service shoulder-straps, and there was a look of weariness about him.

When he rose, a Guards' badge gleamed on his chest, and a row of decorations, among them the Order of Glory and several medals on silk ribbons, clinked against one another. The carpenter—so it seemed at first to Kolya—had put one hand into his pocket to bring something out of it. "I bet he's got something interesting there," Kolya said to himself. Then he saw that Stepan Porfiryevich's hand was stuck into his belt in a queer way and that he was stretching out his left hand to Kolya, who realized in astonishment that it was not a hand but an empty sleeve which was so neatly tucked into the belt. Kolya hastily put his right hand behind his back and shyly held out the left one.

"That's right, Kolya, you'll have to get used to coming at me from the left side," said the carpenter with a sad smile. "They've trimmed me off on one side. But the thought that my arm is buried in German soil makes it easier to put up with—we cut straight into the enemy's territory. And now, let's have some tea—pour some out, Zhenya. And tell me how you've been getting along, Kolya. You've grown all right—I wouldn't have recognized you if I'd met you in the street. You're a bit thin, but your bones look good to me. Still drawing views?"

"I draw a little," Kolya murmured.

"What d'you mean 'a little'? Time you were drawing a lot, isn't it? Everything is over for me, Kolya, I've done my work." He stroked the empty sleeve. "Remember me telling you that man was made to live and be happy? Born with a head and with hands? And nowadays freedom has been given to those hands to do what they like? I can't use my hands the way I used to—I'm only half a man. What kind of a carpenter am I, with only one arm, and the left one at that? What am I good for?"

He rose, taking his tobacco pouch out of his pocket. Adroitly he loosened the strings with his teeth, tore off a piece of cigarette paper, and, without spilling a speck of the shag, rolled a cigarette, licking the paper to make it stick. Next he produced a box of matches and holding it in place between his knees, took out a match, lit his cigarette and flicked the match head off the table, where it had been sent flying. Then he began to scrutinize Kolya who couldn't help smiling to see how cleverly the carpenter had already begun to manage with his left hand. A man like that would never be at a loss, even with one arm. Kolya felt a great desire to say something comforting to the carpenter.

"Look how well you manage," he said, looking sympathetically into his face. "Now take Repin—I mean the famous painter. When his right arm became withered, he learned to paint pictures with his left. Then there was Kardovsky, another very great artist, who also learned to draw with his left hand. So you see there is always a way out."

Kolya spoke shyly, afraid he might in any way make this strong, hard-working man feel his loss more keenly. The carpenter, staring unflinchingly into the boy's blue eyes, fringed by thick lashes, placed a warm broad hand on his shoulder.

"That's quite true, Kolya. If a man has made good at his work, if he's got a real feeling for it, you can cut off both his arms, and he'll still do what he means to do."

Because he wanted to do something big, something to please Zhenya's father, Kolya came home and, taking great pains, began to draw from memory a portrait of Stepan Porfiryevich Striganov on good thick paper. With his new paints he made the tunic green, and included all the decorations, the Guards' badge and the gold wound-stripe. For a long time he mixed

vermilion, ochre and chrome yellow in the little saucer, before he got the right tone for the reddish moustache which the carpenter had grown.

Kolya showed the picture to Zhenya, who thought the world of it, especially the colours, and made a wrought-iron frame for it. The picture, beautifully mounted, was the boys' birthday gift to Zhenya's father. It was duly hung on the wall, and Stepan Porfiryevich, deeply touched, took great pleasure in showing it to everyone—to Semyon Orlov, the janitor, to the house-manager, and to most of the neighbours.

"See what talent can do! You can't deny it's a fine piece of work!" he would say.

Kolya had never been so lavishly praised before.

Spring came with a rush. The poplars burst into leaf, the limes and lilac bushes in the boulevards turned green. The oak alone, the beloved old oak, remained black and bare. In vain did the children of five yards come running every morning to see if there were any buds sprouting. They climbed on the bench and, reaching up to the tree, touched its twigs. The oak was letting them down by refusing to recover from the mortal wound inflicted on it in the winter.

The one-armed carpenter, too, looked wistfully at it. When the children weren't about, he would go up to it, scrape off a bit of bark with a strong finger-nail, pat the trunk with his big hand and bend a branch down close to his eyes, before he turned away with a sigh. His face grew noticeably thinner and less cheerful. At times he would try to work, hammering away with his left hand at something in the shed, but very soon he would be heard flinging the hammer away. He obviously could

not settle to work, and Kolya felt that there was a certain affinity between the injured tree and this man cruelly maimed by the war.

A sharp, cold spell set in to succeed the warm weather.

"Well," said Fyodor Nikolayevich, closing the wide-open window one morning. "If we are to set store by superstition—the oak must be sprouting."

Kolya, rushing out into the yard, ran up to the oak. Oh, joy, glory, victory! All along the branches were heavy swellings, which seemed ready to burst at any moment. Through tiny cracks, here and there, came glimpses of green—there would be leaves! The tree had come to life, after all.

In three days the oak-tree was covered with scallop-edged leaves, at first a delicate green, but rapidly growing darker, as well as tougher and thicker. This made Kolya do yet another drawing of the corner of the yard with the green oak, now come back to life.

On returning from work, Stepan Porfiryevich—who now had a job as a carpenter-instructor—would often stop by the oak. Himself rugged and sturdy like the tree, he would look up at the curly green crown and, throwing back his red head, would say:

"What power the tree's got! And so have we—nothing can break us!"

One day Fyodor Nikolayevich and Natalia Nikolayevna happened to be looking through Kolya's drawings, especially those of the old oak, of which there were more than twenty. They were amazed that they hadn't noticed before how firm their young son's hand had become, how true was his eye and with what mature resolve he was seeking for essentials in his art.

“He’s got the makings of an artist,” said Fyodor Nikolayevich. “That’s obvious.”

He said it as if he were trying to stress the fact that it was not he who had started his son on that difficult road, but that Kolya had chosen it quite independently.

“Yes, he’ll grow up to be an artist—I’m certain he will,” said Kolya’s mother, looking through her son’s drawings. “He has splendid imagination. He must be taught.”

It was decided that Kolya should join the junior art class of the Young Pioneers’ Club.

PART TWO

*To draw means to bring all your
faculties into play.*

FROM P. CHISTYAKOV'S
PRECEPTS TO ARTISTS





Chapter 1

NEW FRIENDS



Kolya joined the art class with a feeling that nothing good would come of it.

The Young Pioneers' Club had taken over the premises of an evacuated kindergarten in Vlashevsky Street, not far from Kolya's home. Unfortunately, the Club's art section had no room of its own. The members wandered from corner to corner in search of a place, till finally they ended up somewhere in the big hall of the house. The building was damp and poorly heated and there always seemed to be a wind roving through the hall. There were not enough easels to go around and the children dragged cold chairs about with them, one to sit on, the other to lean their boards against. The only paper to be had then was rough packing paper. Kolya's first impression of these bleak and uncomfortable surroundings had shorn the art class of all romance; he had imagined it would be quite different.

But as he glanced round the drawings on easels and chairs, he realized that surroundings were not the principal thing. He felt apprehensive; he had not thought that these Young Pioneer boys and girls, sitting with their cloaks on in the cold, uninviting hall, and looking very little older than himself,

would be able to draw so well. How splendid their shading was! How boldly—with a single stroke—they drew their lines! Kolya watched them lean back slightly and with perfect assurance, it seemed, look appraisingly at their work.

He wanted to run away before he disgraced himself in front of everybody. But at that very moment the instructor, moving about among the chairs and easels, caught sight of the timid boy. Kolya had pulled his knitted sports cap off his fair hair, and his deep-blue eyes were moving round the room in evident confusion. Sergei Nikolayevich Yakovlev, the instructor, came over; he was a stocky greying man, with a good-natured, slightly enquiring look.

“Have you joined the class? Are you on the list? Let’s see, what’s your name?”

“Dmitriev.”

“Ah, Dmitriev—Kolya is your first name, isn’t it? I remember your mother telling me about you. Very good. Come over here, please. You children, make room for a new member. Don’t be shy because you’re a new-comer,” he said cheerfully to Kolya, noticing his burning cheeks. “The others have not been here so very long; the classes have been going for only a few weeks now. Let’s have your cap—you’d better keep your coat on. It’s a bit chilly here. Have you ever drawn from life? . . . Splendid! Try to draw this.”

The instructor placed a jug and a wooden box in front of the children, who looked sideways at Kolya. Kolya thought it was queer and senseless to combine two objects which in life were not likely to stand together at all. At home he had usually selected things which were in some way connected: a carafe and a glass, a bowl and a plate, a fruit-stand and an apple. He did not realize that the instructor had deliberately



Mountain Crystal

chosen objects unlike in form—the well-rounded, curving jug, and the hard rectangular box.

But there was no time to sit and wonder about it. The other boys and girls had already set to work, and Kolya, too, settling himself as comfortably as he could on his chair, unbuttoned his coat and began to draw. He saw the instructor, Sergei Nikolayevich, come up to one child and then another, bending over till his eyes were on a level with the pupil's.

Kolya caught words of advice and instruction. "Look how the drawing is out of balance, slipping downwards," or "This line is all wrong, you've extended it too far. Use your eyes more carefully and think things out." Kolya had often enough heard similar remarks from Dad and Mother at home, when he was drawing from life.

For about half an hour the instructor left Kolya alone—obviously to let him show what he could do independently. Finally he came over and looked at Kolya's drawing.

"Well done!" he said. "You've got the form right and the composition of your drawing is good. I see you and I are going to get on. Now go to it and put in the shadows."

But here things did not go so smoothly as Kolya had hoped. He had been warned by Dad not to use a soft shading pencil, but to get accustomed to drawing with a hard one. Ignoring his father's advice, Kolya had secretly taken with him a thick soft pencil.

"You've made a mess of that drawing, a positive mess!" Kolya heard the instructor's voice behind him. "Let me see the pencil you're using." Sergei Nikolayevich took the soft pencil out of Kolya's hand and, shaking his head, went on: "I strongly advise you to get a hard pencil, my boy, for you can't manage a soft one yet, though you'll be using a soft one before long."

Just then, Sergei Nikolayevich was called away. In a flash Kolya tore the smudged drawing from the board and threw it face downwards on the floor. Ten minutes later, when Sergei Nikolayevich came back, he saw a clean drawing, lightly sketched as yet, but clearly showing in well thought-out strokes an outline of the rounded jug and the wooden box with its smooth straight sides. Sergei Nikolayevich picked up the crumpled drawing before Kolya had time to kick it under his chair. Looking from the drawing to the youthful artist, he realized that the boy had not merely drawn the objects over again; he was now trying to convey the impression of volume and space by lines alone, almost without shading.

"There's a youngster for you—proud and persevering," thought Sergei Nikolayevich, who was beginning to like the new boy.

"D'you know," he said to Kolya two months later, "I think I'd better have you transferred to the senior group. And you can tell them at home that I'm very pleased with you. But don't get conceited."

"Of course I won't, Sergei Nikolayevich," Kolya muttered, blushing. "But to tell the truth, I hate my own work, and I sometimes think I ought to chuck it altogether."

"Nonsense! Chuck it, indeed! As to hating your work, that's not so bad—you shouldn't like it. You must learn to draw better—that goes without saying—but when you begin to like everything you do, you and I will have nothing more to say to each other. Remember, doubts and constant trials are the companions of talent, and self-complacency is the refuge of the mediocre. But that's beside the point, for, no matter what you say, I mean to transfer you to the senior group."

Kolya now began to draw with children two and even three

years older than himself. Their drawings from life were sometimes better than his, but when it came to drawing "from memory and imagination," as the composition tasks were called, there was no one as good as Kolya. Since the Great Patriotic War, now raging far from Moscow, was uppermost in the children's minds, tanks, planes, galloping cavalry, and guns spitting fire, predominated in their drawings.

Kolya, too, did battle-scenes, but he often surprised the others by bringing from home or drawing in class pictures of Russian warriors of old, storming fortresses in battles of long ago. Knights sung in Russian epics were shown slashing fiercely at their enemies. At other times, when the children were told to choose their own subjects, Kolya would draw workers in the Moscow underground, sitting down after work, with big toil-worn hands, like the hands of the carpenter Stepan Porfiryevich. Some of his pictures had a comic touch such as a scene in the yard, with Uncle Semyon, the janitor, and an angry housewife holding under his nose a football which had crashed through her window.

"Could you tell me, old man," Sergei Nikolayevich once asked him, "why you either draw scenes from everyday life, or, when you want to do something heroic, you get away from modern life and plunge into the past, even going to legend for your subjects?"

Kolya stopped to think before he answered:

"I really don't know why." After another pause he added: "Perhaps it's because I never had a close view of the war, Sergei Nikolayevich, and I don't know much about it. I used to draw whatever came into my head—things I knew little about. But lately I've been reading a lot of history and I can imagine the past very clearly. Somehow in the past I can pick

out the things that are most important, the real truth. But when I think how our people are fighting today, I feel so humble that I daren't draw them in case I don't do them justice."

Kolya was soon chosen monitor of the group at the studio. It was just at about this time that Nina Shirotina, a small girl, no more than eight years of age, joined the class. Dark, timid, and somehow like a weasel, she would slip between the other children and take her place at some far corner. She was the youngest of the group and had been admitted because Sergei Nikolayevich thought her extremely capable. Her father had been killed at the front, and it was only right to encourage the little girl, although she did not feel at ease among children so much older than herself.

Kolya was glad to help Nina to pin her paper to her board; in doing so he gave an exact imitation of Sergei Nikolayevich's manner. He also showed her how to hold her pencil, and couldn't help adding: "I'll give you a piece of advice, little girl. Use a harder pencil. The soft one will get you into trouble, and besides it'll spoil your hand. You can take my word for it," he finished in a more natural voice.

The child looked up at this blue-eyed boy, the monitor of the group, who seemed so much older and cleverer than she was, and obediently changed her pencil. From that day on Kolya, no matter what he happened to be drawing, always found time to go over to Nina Shirotina to see how she was getting on and, if need be, to advise and help her.

One day Nina Shirotina's mother called to find out what progress Nina was making. Sergei Nikolayevich said the girl was a credit to the group. From the way the mother's tired face brightened Kolya realized how eager she was to hear good

things said about her daughter. Later, when the mother happened to pass him, he asked casually:

"You're Nina's mother, aren't you? Your daughter really has wonderful ability—we're all surprised at how quickly she grasps things. For example, the other day, when we had the rules of perspective explained to us, many of the older kids couldn't understand, but Nina picked it up at once, and now she knows perfectly well what perspective is."

He said nothing of the fact that he had discovered the laws of perspective on his own at the age of six and a half, and that he had only the day before explained them to Nina, who was somewhat at a loss.

Nina Shirotina's home looked out on the same yard as the Young Pioneers' Club. There not being enough easels to go around, she took along to the lessons a drawing-board so big that she could easily have lain down to sleep on it. Kolya would push Nina gently aside, take the board from her and carry it to the studio. "It's too heavy for you," he would say.

The little would-be artist was quite enchanted by the attention shown to her by this big boy who had the reputation of being better at drawing than anyone else in the group. "How wonderful it must be to have a brother like him," she thought.

"Have you a sister?" she asked Kolya.

"I have."

"Older than yourself?"

"No, younger."

"What's her name?"

"Katya—Katyusha—and her full name is Figgimigigit Simarik-Barbarik."

"What does it mean?"

"Oh, now nothing at all. Calling her that has become habit. It had something to do with a game we played when I was little, but now the name's lost its meaning."

"How happy Katya must be!" Nina said, sighing with unconcealed envy.

"What's she got to be happy about? That we call her Figgimigit?" laughed Kolya.

"Because she's got a brother like you. I bet she's proud of you and talks about you to her friends."

Kolya was on the point of saying "Ha . . . ha . . ." but he choked over it and soon felt his cheeks and neck burning till his ears began to itch. The questions of this little girl who envied Katya, thinking it must be wonderful to have a brother like him, made Kolya feel uncomfortable.

How different he was from the ideal brother she imagined him to be. Kolya remembered how often, with no regard for Katya's feelings, he would sketch on the covers of her exercise-books and even tear pages out of them. He remembered how, taking advantage of the fact that he was the stronger of the two, he would sometimes grab Katya's ball or skipping-rope out of her hands. And at the class they thought him a good brother! He looked askance at the dark-haired little girl pestering him with her stupid questions and even making him blush. He hastily said good-bye and hurried home.

He found Katya in her favourite chair, cutting out and pasting something.

"Figgimi . . . pah! I mean, Katya, shall I help you with what you're doing?" Kolya asked. "Come and I'll draw something for you."

"On the cover of my exercise-book?" his sister enquired sternly.

"Why do you talk like that?" Kolya was embarrassed. "Want me to tear out a page from my drawing-pad for you?"

Katya looked distrustfully at her brother. What on earth was happening to him?

"Let me draw some designs for your time-table," Kolya suggested.

Soon the two heads were bent together over the table, Kolya busy making designs for Katya's time-table.

"Katya, if ever you want me to do something for you—out with it," Kolya was saying. "Remember we're both Young Pioneers, not just brother and sister. It's funny that at school and at the art class they should all come for my opinion, while you don't. That's why you're a Figgimigigit . . . All right, forget it—I was just joking, and you're taking it in earnest again."

Wherever Kolya went now he took along his little pocket drawing-pad with its canvas cover. It went with him to the grocer's and to the post-office, and not for the world would he have parted with it. Burning with impatience, he rarely waited to come home to paint what he saw in the street or in the shop, but would stop to sketch faces, figures or groups of people right on the spot. "You still can't draw the human body," his mother told him. "Look how twisted the arm looks. Is that where the bend of your elbow is? You must be more observant."

But in the human figures drawn with just a few strokes of the pencil, some breaking all the rules of anatomy, one could, vaguely as yet, discern character and feel the sweep of movement. Suddenly a line standing out from the maze of hastily drawn strokes would reveal the idea behind the drawing.

After the incident with the oak, even Victor held his tongue, while Zhenya would respectfully watch Kolya tucking his

drawing-pad under his shirt as he made ready to go for a walk.

“‘No good hunter would go out into the field without his gun, and no artist without his sketch-book and paints,’” Kolya explained, and as usual blushed shyly. “That’s what Surikov said—I read it in a book about him.”

Zhenya looked indulgently at Kolya, who, it seemed, couldn’t help being crazy about making pictures.

Chapter 2

THE “GREEN GIRLS”

Kolya was making new friends in and outside the art class. One day he was playing ice-hockey with the boys near the Institute for the Deaf, on a piece of vacant ground made accessible by the fences being down. They weren’t playing real hockey, just knocking a lump of ice about with some sticks. But it not being played in the proper manner did not in any way diminish the excitement of the game.

Expert at dribbling the “puck” over the ice, Kolya was zigzagging, leaping forward, sending it into an imaginary goal. Absorbed as he was in the game, he did not fail to note that the “green girls” were there again. The boys had given this name to two girls who often came to the vacant lot to sledge down the ice-slopes. The girls kept their distance but now and then would look over towards the hockey-players. They seemed to be twins; both wore the same green coats and green hats, trimmed with grey astrakhan, and grey mitts, embroidered in white, and they looked exactly alike, so that from a distance it was impossible to tell one from the other.



Watching the Ice Break. Water-colour

A number of times the boys sent Katya over to the two sisters to find out if they would like to make friends. The boys could give them sleigh rides, or even pile the ice-hill higher, if they liked.

Once, when Katya, now quite used to doing orderly duty, set off for the far corner of the lot, she stayed there almost half an hour, pretending all the time that she had come of her own accord. She returned with the news that the girls' names were Kira and Nadya, that they were indeed twins, that she had forgotten their surname, and that they had no objection to getting to know "nice" boys, but the boys would have to make the first approach.

Kolya was for going, but Zhenya and Victor said that would be just too much—it would make the girls put on airs.

Then Kolya had an idea. A minute later a big soft snowball came flying from the direction of the hockey-players; it shot against the foot of one of the "green girls" and broke into small white lumps. The girls, ready to be furious, glared at the boys; then they caught sight of a scrap of ruled paper lying among the remains of the snowball. They picked it up and read:

"Kira and Nadya, we want you to come and play with us and be friends." The note was signed by Zhenya, Kolya and Victor.

From their end of the lot the boys could see the sisters giggling. Then one of them took out a pencil, moistened the tip, wrote something on the back of the note, made a snowball, stuck the rolled note into it and hurled it with all her might. She threw badly of course, with her arm swung above her head, as most girls do, and the snowball went wide of the mark. But Kolya, enjoying the reputation of a crack goal-

keeper, saw where it would fall, and made a dash for it. "Got it!" he cried.

On the other side of the note in the snowball, Kolya read: "We agree. Come to the middle of the lot. We'll be there, too. Kira, Nadya."

Thus, with no loss of dignity or face on either side, the three boys and the "green girls" met in the middle of the lot and there made one another's acquaintance.

It was a clear frosty day, with the air sparkling like diamonds, and the children enjoyed each other's company. They played snowballs—with no notes in them now, of course—built a snow fort, and sledged down the slope. Kolya, as he rode in the sledge with Kira, noticed that she had a tiny mole on her cheek, next to the ear, which her sister did not have. This made it easy for Kolya to tell Nadya from Kira at once. It surprised him that he should have thought the girls so much alike. He could see now how different they really were. Nadya was sturdier than her sister and much bolder. Kira was very shy, blushed as easily as Kolya himself did, and had a steady thoughtful look, quite unlike the darting glances of her fun-loving sister.

The slope was not steep, but Kolya's heart missed a beat when, skilfully steering the sleigh, he flew down it, holding Kira by the elbow as she sat in front of him, his cheek almost touching the girl's green hat, with the wind blowing the chestnut curls from under it so that they tickled his nose. What fun it all was—even when their sleigh capsized and the one behind ran into it, so that they rolled over and over in a heap, the snow getting into their eyes and nostrils and behind their collars. What laughter, tumbling and screeching! It was Nadya who did most of the screeching. Kira usually cried out softly,

laughing and throwing back her head in an attempt to shake the snow out of her curls.

Afterwards, the boys, panting for breath, heated, rosy-cheeked, saw the girls home, arranging to meet the next day in the same place. Kolya begged them to meet later to give him time to come from the art class and join them. He would have liked to avoid the subject of his studies but Zhenya gave him away.

"He's an artist, you know—he'll step into Repin's shoes in no time," he said.

"A half-baked Repin, that's what he'll be," gibed Victor.

The others laughed, but Kolya frowned, glad it was too dark for his flushed face to be seen. He could take a joke, but he did wish the talk had not turned upon what was for him the most sacred, the most important thing in life. He resented his drawing being made light of and never, if he could help it, brought up the subject of his studies at the Pioneers' Club.

"Well, what do you think of the girls?" Zhenya asked on their way back. "I'm glad we made friends, anyway. Which of the two d'you like best, Kolya?"

"I haven't thought about it, honestly. They both seem jolly nice girls."

"I like the sturdier one best. She's livelier—Nadya, I mean; the other's too quiet, isn't she?"

"I don't know," said Kolya.

"I don't care for either of them," declared Victor. "Now when I was out east there was a ballet dancer living in the same flat, and what a daughter she had..."

"All right, all right!" Kolya broke in. "Tell someone else about her—I'm off, I've got things to do. Haven't finished my homework yet!"

"See you don't catch cold, you half-baked Repin!" Victor shouted after him. "Run along, or Mummy and Daddy will spank their naughty boy."

Without answering, Kolya disappeared in the darkness. He soon heard quick footsteps behind him, and felt a hand on his shoulder. He turned—it was Zhenya.

"Don't be mad at him, Kolya. He's not a bad sort really—it's only his tongue. Let's not take him along with us tomorrow. I don't like the way he talks either—too smart."

"I wish he wouldn't hang around. How can you stand him? He's dirt," said Kolya, and Zhenya knew that the word on his friend's lips was the worst he could utter. "And the boys he keeps company with are all louts like himself," added Kolya.

"They're so much alike, the girls," said Zhenya, pursuing his own trend of thought. "At first I mixed them up and I was sure I was helping Nadya on to the sleigh to ride down the slope with her, but it was really Kira. They're the image of one another!"

"No," said Kolya. "No," he repeated thoughtfully, "you're wrong, Zhenya. They're quite different, not a bit like each other. You only have to look carefully."

The "green girls" had meanwhile run into the house. Having thrown off their wet hats and shaken the snow from their coats, they rushed up to their mother.

"Mummy dear, we've made friends with such a nice boy!" Kira hastened to tell her.

"Three boys," interrupted Nadya.

"He has such wonderful eyes, serious, you know, just a tiny bit lighter than blue."

"And they're so chummy. One of them is ever so funny, with curly hair as red as a fire."

could help in an emergency like this. Never, unless there was good reason for it, did he like drawing attention to himself. He felt that his work and his work alone should testify to any ability he had. But the picture of Kira, miserable and at a loss what to do, made him say:

"Suppose I help her out?"

"But could you really?"

"What a question!" cried Zhenya. "Didn't I tell you he'll be as good as Repin in no time."

"Oh, stop it!" Kolya muttered. "Stop that nonsense, Zhenya—you know how I hate it."

"Can you really draw well, Kolya?" asked Nadya.

"Not really well, but I can draw a little, and I'm studying. If Kira needs help I'll do my best for her."

Five minutes later Nadya was at her home, proudly ushering in the two boys.

"Mummy, here are Zhenya and Kolya, the two boys we made friends with. Kolya knows how to draw and he wants to help Kira."

Kira, quite miserable, smudged with paint and glue, was sitting at the table amid a clutter of magazines and torn pictures. A spot of spilt India ink stared from the table, and the hand that Kira stretched out in greeting was sticky and stained.

"I can do absolutely nothing," she told her friends dolefully. "It's such bad luck Zina being ill."

Kolya looked at the table and at those around him like a surgeon called to the bedside of a patient who had been pronounced hopeless.

"So," he began, trying with all his might not to blush, although with the corner of his eye he could see that all present,

"He's learning to draw."

"They live quite near—in Plotnikov Street."

"We're going sleigh-riding with them tomorrow again."

It was hardly surprising that poor Mother got everything quite muddled. She could not make out which boy had blue eyes, which had red hair, which was learning to draw, and where each of them lived.

The girls and boys went sleigh-riding the next day and the day after. Victor had somehow, of his own accord, dropped out of the company. It appeared that he was bored, and besides he was getting ready for an amateur entertainment.

Kolya and Zhenya and the two girls very quickly became the best of friends.

The boys learned that the girls' surname was Suzdaltsev. They went together to matinées at the Pioneers' Club, borrowed books from each other and in the evenings met on the vacant lot. When they played tag or other games Kolya was Kira's partner. And when other children joined in their games, it always turned out that Kira was on the same side as Kolya. Loyal little Katya kept hurrying with notes up and down the street as fast as her legs could carry her.

One day Nadya appeared without her sister.

"Kira's been assigned by the Pioneers to get the wall newspaper out," she said, accounting for her sister's absence. "She's the editor and the girl who is to make up the paper is ill. They should have thought of it before, but they didn't. Now Kira's so upset she's almost crying. She's cutting pictures out of magazines and pasting them. But it's not much good."

Kolya was reluctant in front of everybody to hint that he

including the girls' mother, were looking expectantly at him. "So, the size of the wall newspaper we know—it's two sheets. You've got paints, haven't you, Kira? Let's see them. They'll do. Are all your headings supposed to be in printed type, or only a part of them?"

Answers were given respectfully, and he felt that he had been accepted as one who knew what he was about.

"Is this a flower you drew?" he asked Kira.

"No, it's a Pioneer bonfire," she confessed.

"Hm . . . The flames aren't quite what they should be. You know what, Kira, let's paste a clean sheet of paper over it. And I'll try to draw what you had in mind. All right? But look, the glue's all dry. Zhenya, go along with Nadya and heat it up a bit. Altogether, there's really not so very much to do here."

"But I'll catch it at the Pioneer meeting tomorrow!" said Kira with a sigh.

She looked at him so hopefully that he was eager to comfort and cheer her up as much as possible.

"Don't worry, you won't catch it," he said. "What'll happen remains to be seen. But what's the use of getting upset beforehand?"

"You'll be wasting a lot of time here, Kolya, and you've got your lessons to do, haven't you?"

"That's my affair. I've done them all except two problems in arithmetic."

Kolya got down to work. At first he felt somehow ill at ease because Kira was looking over his shoulder, although she made a pretence of not wanting to watch him, and kept turning away. But gradually he fell into the mood which took possession of him whenever he was doing something important and dear to him.

He became oblivious of his surroundings. Interesting ideas raced through his mind, and he had a clear conception of what the wall newspaper, now lying before him as two blank Whatman sheets, must look like. The words of Yura, the Young Pioneers' leader, about the little tongue of a great flame and about the unshakable ranks of the Pioneers now, for some reason or other, came back to him. In his mind, thoughts were shaping themselves into pictures. He was no longer aware of Kira, who walked on tiptoe behind him and waved a hand at Zhenya and Nadya, whispering: "Hush!" For the present Kolya was wholly dominated by the need to fill the blank paper in front of him with all that was in his mind and to depict it in the most effective way. Now and then he would stretch out behind him a hand with a bottle in it and would say briefly: "Water" or "Glue," before plunging into his task again.

But at last he drew himself up, and the others, who had been standing at a distance, not daring to approach, came up to the table. There was a general murmur of delight and surprise. How beautiful the paper looked! Its name, "Pioneer Rocket," was drawn against the background of Moscow's night sky; over the star-crowned Kremlin towers the silvery beams of search lights and coloured tracer rockets made up the letters of the heading. In place of Kira's drawing, which Kolya had taken for a flower, a real bonfire glowed. Sparks showered from its flames, turning into stars and clusters of many-coloured rockets, which flew up and down the paper to form the margins between columns. All that remained to be done was to paste in the articles.

Kira stood squeezing her chin between her two little fists. "Oh, Kolya, I never imagined, why it's . . . Oh, Kolya! . . ."

She could not say another word. Her mother hurried in, followed by other members of the household. There were exclamations of delight from everybody; all eyes were on the beautifully painted paper, and then on the flushing, blue-eyed, fair-haired boy, who, in his confusion, kept awkwardly stirring with his brush the dirty liquid in the paint-bottle.

Zhenya felt prouder than anybody else. He looked triumphantly at Kira, Nadya, her mother and the whole household. Hadn't he told them . . .

Kolya washed the brushes and said to Kira: "Let them dry a bit. And now I'll be going."

Kira ran after him into the hall where he was putting on his coat. Pressing his paint-stained fingers tightly in both her hands, she said: "Kolya, my conscience bothers me a little—I didn't know you drew so well. I shouldn't have let you spend so much time here. Why, you're simply wonderful!"

"Nonsense, I couldn't leave you in the lurch," Kolya replied. "Now remember to be careful when you paste on the strips with the articles. And, please, I shouldn't like either you or Nadya to mention in class that I had anything to do with the paper. Is that a deal?"

She nodded understandingly, without taking her eyes off him.

Kolya walked home with Zhenya. He felt happy, rather proud, and a little embarrassed by the whole thing. Wasn't there something of the conquering hero in it all? He had come on the scene, dashed off some paintings and taken everyone quite by surprise. The whole thing, he thought, was very much in Victor's style—Victor who liked to show off so much. An uncomfortable feeling came over him. Had he tried to cut a dash?

Chapter 3

THE CHEMISTRY OF SALUTE LIGHTS

Only a social sense will give the painter strength and increase his powers tenfold. Only an intellectual atmosphere in which he feels at ease and which is wholesome, will elevate him to great heights of spirit and mood.

FROM I. KRAMSKOY'S
LETTER TO I. REPIN

Things seemed to be going well. There was a feeling in the air that the end of the war was near. Frenziedly as the enemy was fighting, he was now wasting his strength and, bleeding at every pore, was aimlessly tormenting a world that longed for peace.

One hot, clear summer day a column of sixty thousand fascist prisoners of war staggered through the streets of Moscow. Kolya and some of the other boys went to look at the passing prisoners. Kolya even managed to make a few sketches in his pad. There they were, the glum, cheerless faces, the grey-green uniforms, which Moscovites had previously seen only on the screen. And now thousands of Moscow's citizens stood silently on the pavements. The austere stillness which fell on both sides of the street was broken by the sound of the shuffling feet of those who but a short time ago had hoped to march in glory through the Red Square and the whole of the country, to trample with their fascist boots all that was dear and sacred. Kolya observed them quietly, but would now and then snatch his drawing-pad from his pocket and begin to sketch.

At school things were going well, too. Kolya was promoted to the next form with an excellent report. Yura, the Young

Pioneers' leader, was pleased with him, too. At a meeting of the Young Pioneers Kolya's name was mentioned among the most active members. At the studio Sergei Nikolayevich praised him. But Kolya was not pleased with himself. Brooding over the drawings he had done in the studio and at home, he grew more and more gloomy and felt a positive aversion for them.

"Not a single one of them is any good," he complained to Zhenya.

"You shouldn't scamp," Zhenya said sententiously.

"What d'you take me for?" asked Kolya, cut to the quick. "You see, it's this way. I used to draw whatever came into my head. Now I begin to plan things beforehand. I want to have an idea what my drawing will look like after it's finished. But somehow it doesn't come out the way I want it to. I feel I'm growing up in many respects, but when I look at my work it seems to me I haven't grown a bit. I can't tell what's the matter. I'll come to nothing, I suppose—I just haven't got it in me. What a mistake it was to praise me."

Kolya did have some grounds for doubting his own powers, for he was having a great deal of trouble with colour. In drawing he had made good progress, overstripping practically all his fellow-pupils. A blank sheet of drawing-paper no longer had any terrors for him and he would boldly fill it with his composition. But when it came to painting he did not seem to get on at all. Even Sergei Nikolayevich was perplexed and asked himself if it were possible that the lad had no feeling for colour and that his gift was confined to drawing. By way of testing this, he asked Kolya to bring his father's oil-paints to the studio, and set him to drawing several objects. After making sure what the colours of the objects were, he was to transfer these colours to the canvas. And it appeared that Kolya knew his colours

well enough, but he could not get down their relative values on paper or canvas. Here was some strange discrepancy. Apparently Kolya was hindered by technical difficulties: he could not produce the colour he needed—in other words, he could not mix his colours properly. At the same time he never failed to discern the colour tones in the model before him.

Sergei Nikolayevich sent a note, asking Kolya's parents to call at the studio.

"Your son, undoubtedly, has talent," he told them. "He has made good progress, and it would be a crime for him not to go on with his studies. But it's time he began studying art in earnest. Just now, he's having difficulty in mastering the technical side of painting, although he has a flawless sense of colour. We have lessons here only twice a week, and besides we're moving to a suburb of Moscow—it'll be a long way for him to travel. If I were you, I'd try to get him into a proper art school. There's one not far from here."

This was a matter which required serious consideration. Attending the art class, which was little more than an amateur class, was one thing; but to take up art in earnest and to study it along with his work at school was something different, and Kolya, as well as his parents, wondered if he would manage. Besides, was it wise for him to decide upon art as a profession? He longed desperately for the knowledge that would reveal to him all the many mysteries and secrets of the art he loved so well, but he had seen for himself how many of his fellow-pupils at the class, after making astonishing progress, would end by marking time and even falling behind the rest, despite the efforts of good old Sergei Nikolayevich, till at last they had to give up their studies and leave the class. Besides, at an exhibition of children's drawings, to which the Pioneers had once

been taken, Kolya had seen many really fine pictures, much better than his own, he thought.

Kolya confided his doubts to Yura.

"I don't see anything so terrible in all this, Kolya," Yura said, shaking his curly head and looking into Kolya's trustful eyes. "You're not going to leave school, so you'll be following the same road as we all do. Of course, it'll mean extra work. Consider it your Pioneer duty and go ahead with it. You must do well at art school, too." With a paternal air, he adjusted the red tie on Kolya's chest and gave him a pat under the chin. "You know you have ability, so why get cold feet? In our day when you've got a gift you don't keep it to yourself, or use it to draw in albums or make up wall newspapers. That is not the Pioneer way. You may become a real artist, for all we know. So how I look at it is that the talent we possess is not only our own, it belongs to the people. Should we hide it then? What do you think?"

Kolya said nothing but the words of the Pioneer leader impressed him deeply. "Talent . . . belongs to the people"—he hadn't thought of it that way. True, he had helped with the wall newspaper and had once come to Kira's aid. But these were trifles. Now it appeared that if one had some gift, one had to develop it for the good of the people.

"I see you still feel uncertain," Yura went on. "I suppose I haven't explained things too well. I'll tell you what—come up to our place on Sunday. Dad likes having kids around. He's even organized a Young Geologists' Society at the City Pioneers' Club, and he takes the boys and girls on all sorts of outings. Anyway, let me tell you my Dad's wonderful. Maybe you've heard of him—he's made quite a name for himself as a geologist and a geochemist. I'm sure he'll explain things to

you far better than I've done. Bring your drawings along when you come."

Kolya, at the time, had never heard of Yura Gaiburov's father, Professor Alexander Nikolayevich Gaiburov, although the latter had long been famous as an eminent geologist. When Kolya was too little to read, the newspapers had been full of accounts of Professor Gaiburov's wonderful geological expeditions. An old Bolshevik, whose noble but dangerous revolutionary work had made him knock about the world a good deal, Professor Gaiburov had been practically in every corner of the earth and all over his native country. Nowadays, whenever his expeditions took him to remote parts of Eastern Siberia, he would remark jokingly that to him, of all people, Siberian roads were very familiar, for before the Revolution he had trudged along them to exile.

The professor was a widower, his wife having been killed in an explosion at a chemical laboratory. He now lived with Yura, an only son, who, he hoped, would succeed him in his work. The professor was extremely fond of children, who were always welcome at his home. And all children adored him. He was particularly popular with the Young Pioneers.

Kolya knew nothing of this when on Sunday he pressed the bell of the massive door which bore an old-fashioned copper plate with the words "Prof. A. N. Gaiburov" engraved on it.

The door was opened, as Kolya had hoped, by Yura himself.

"I'm glad you came. I wondered if you'd change your mind. Dad's expecting you."

He helped Kolya hang up his coat on the rack, took a look at him, and with a habitual gesture adjusted the Pioneer tie Kolya wore round his neck. Then he led Kolya into a spacious room full of bookcases and cupboards, the shelves packed with

bright-coloured stones and rough specimens of ore with a dull lustre. There was a table littered with books, and there, too, could be seen specimens of rock, bits of metal and some brown-coloured lumps. Above it hung two portraits. One, Yura explained, was of Professor Vernadsky and the other of Professor Fersman, both members of the Academy of Sciences.

"Dad's worked with them," he said. "Have a look at this," he went on, pointing to a framed photograph on the opposite wall.

Kolya saw a huge, fantastically decorated hall in what looked like a fairy palace. Quaint sparkling chandeliers hung from the ceiling, and towards them stretched fanciful, mysterious-looking sculptures. At the foot of the many tall columns, adorned with curious mouldings, stood tiny creatures holding torches. In the middle of the hall was a small fir-tree with lighted candles.

"That's a New Year affair that Dad arranged for the local kids and evacuees at the Sculpture Grotto of the famous Kungur Cave," Yura explained. "Dad's great at thinking up things like that. There he is in the picture, see?" Yura pointed to a short man with a funny little hat. Beside him stood a taller man. "And that's Alexander Timofeyevich Khlebnikov, keeper of the Kungur Cave. He's been christened 'Cave-Dweller.' In 1921 he showed Mikhail Ivanovich Kalinin round the cave. Dad was there, too."

"So, you've made a full report already," said a rich, vibrating voice.

Kolya started back from the photograph and turned to see the professor coming into the room. He was a man of medium height but exceedingly broad-shouldered. His face beamed with health, and around his laughing eyes, as clear as a child's and

full of mischievous curiosity, tiny wrinkles broke through a coat of tan. The hair at his temples was white, but his small, old-fashioned beard was hardly touched with grey. The beard seemed out of keeping with the boyish velvet jacket he wore, the breast pocket of which held crayons, a fountain-pen and a round, thick-rimmed magnifying glass. The professor had on the same kind of short breeches and heavy tourist socks (like those worn by mountain climbers, thought Kolya) which he had seen in the picture of the Sculpture Grotto. He gave the impression of being very much alive, delighting in motion. He strode energetically into the room, his head slightly to one side and an arm outstretched, snapping his fingers with every step he took.

Kolya jumped to attention and raised his hand in a Pioneer salute.

"How d'you do," he said.

"Ah! I answer your salute. May I introduce myself? Gai-burov's my name." The professor shook hands vigorously. "Sit down here," he said, pointing to a big leather-upholstered couch.

But without giving Kolya time to reach the couch, the professor impatiently seized him by the elbow and sat him down at his side. Then he picked up some sort of coloured stone from the table and, holding it under Kolya's nose, questioned him briskly:

"What's that? What's it called?"

Kolya did not touch the sparkling, half-transparent piece of stone with a shot of brown through it. He peered at its smooth surface, unable to say a word.

Yura, standing behind Kolya, began to whisper something in his ear.

"Stop prompting!" his father shouted at him. "You can't put

it over me—I used to be pretty good at prompting myself and I know all the tricks. That means you don't recognize the specimen. Too bad, for it's something you ought to know. The Pioneers in my circle can tell you what it is with their eyes shut. It is a kind of rock crystal, a smoky variety of quartz . . .” With a deft, precise movement, the professor took from the shelf of one of the cupboards a glass-like bar of a delicate shot of mauve. “And this is its cousin, so to speak, an amethyst crystal, not faceted either. These are things you must know, my lad, if you really want to be an artist in the full sense of that very serious word, and not just a dilettante. You must be extremely versatile, and know all about flowers, stones, birds' language, the ways of animals, and the ways of human beings. You must understand, among other things, the laws of light—that is, the science of optics—the path of the constellations, history, the structure of the earth. On top of that, you've got to know the price of bread, the formulas to which steam and electric current may be reduced, government laws, the secrets of the atom—all these must have their place in the true artist's imagination. Otherwise he will be worth nothing, like some of the specimens we geologists pick up now and then; you look and think—there is a precious stone! But when you touch it, it goes to pieces, for it's rotten.”

“I'm not at all sure that I'll make an artist,” Kolya said softly.

“What? Scared? That won't do, young man, won't do at all! You don't want to give up so easily, do you? Now get this straight: I didn't mean that you must attain a high degree of scholarship in every field. It was hard to be a Lomonosov, and nowadays the sum total of human knowledge is so great that it is well-nigh impossible. But today we expect the true scholar

to know something about everything, and everything in his own field—that is, everything accessible to human knowledge, which is a great deal, I may tell you. An inquiring mind and extensive knowledge are essential. Well, I can see you're quite overwhelmed by all I've said. We'd better take a look at the drawings you've brought."

"I . . . I don't know if . . ." Kolya faltered. "It was Yura who told me to bring them along."

"I'm glad he did. Let's see them."

With an unsteady hand Kolya untied the strings of the folder and began taking out his drawings. Among them were still-life studies done in the class, street scenes and pictures made from memory and imagination.

"Hm, Russian knights. And this? A bad-tempered housewife? Is this a janitor or a Supreme Court judge? Oh, I see. Well, I think the colouring is a little overdone here," the professor mumbled softly and half-querulously to himself as he looked through the drawings.

Afterwards he examined for a long time some of the drawings he had put aside. Kolya watched the expression of his face. He singled out one drawing, frowned attentively at it, threw back his head and then bent over the drawing again.

"What's your name again?" he asked abruptly. "Kolya Dmitriev? Well, listen to what I'm going to tell you, Kolya Dmitriev." The professor had for some reason passed from the familiar "thou" to the respectful "you." "I'm not an authority in this field but I understand something about it, for there were some great artists among my friends. And I can tell you this much—for a boy of your age this is really splendid work. That you doubt your abilities is not a bad thing. I do not particularly relish young people with too high an

opinion of themselves. You, young man, are still very ignorant. You've got ability, but sometimes you let it go to waste. I can see that you draw better than you paint. You still don't know your colours well enough. But what can one expect? You've a lot of study and hard work ahead of you. Jules Renard, the entertaining French writer, once said: 'Talent is a question of quantity. Having talent does not mean producing one page of writing, but three hundred pages. The strong-willed do not falter but sit down at their desks and sweat till they see the thing through and all the paper they have is filled with writing. That is the difference between the talented and the faint-hearted, who never have the guts to begin anything...' So you've got to get the better of your faint-heartedness and settle down to work. But, of course, you shouldn't leave school yet, for talent without knowledge will yield nothing. Talent, as I see it, is like the soil, and knowledge is an array of mental implements for ploughing the soil and reaping its harvest. Craftsmanship might be called an expression of will, the finding of ways and means to bring the mind and soul into action. Do you see what I mean, or is it too complicated?"

Kolya shook his head rapidly. It pleased him greatly to have the professor speak to him as to a grown-up person and he was avidly taking in every word.

"Then there's Chistyakov—you've heard of him? Well, you will if you study art in earnest. He was a powerful artist and an art teacher of real genius. Chistyakov said that in the last analysis to produce real art is 'to feel, to know and to be able.' I see that you already feel a thing or two, but you know little and naturally you are able to accomplish still less."

"Why do you use 'you' and not 'thou' when you're speaking to Kolya?" Yura interrupted, smiling.

"Do I really?" asked the professor in surprise. "I hadn't noticed it myself. It means, I suppose, that I've conceived a respect for him." And he broke into such loud, rollicking laughter that he sent a piece of paper flying across the desk and set the minerals jangling on the shelves. "Yes, I've conceived a respect for him, I suppose. I remember reading somewhere in Jack London . . ."

"I've read Jack London, too," Kolya ventured to put in.

"And a very good thing. Jack London says that youth must be let have its own way: that's true, youth must be let have its way, and old age must be given way to. Maturity must stand up for itself and for everybody else, for it has nobody to fall back on. But hard work and perseverance can make your years of maturity very satisfying. And now tell me, have you ever thought why it is that you want so much to draw?"

He stared into Kolya's face, but the boy did not lower his gaze although the question took him by surprise.

"I don't really know," he began and then stopped.

"Don't try to be clever. Don't rack your brains—just say what you feel and think," the professor said encouragingly.

"Because . . . because," Kolya said slowly, "to my mind, there are so many beautiful and interesting things all around us. Lots of people don't see them, and I think that's a pity. I'm always on the look-out for these things, and I try to remember what I see. I shut my eyes and my imagination begins to work. If I can, I check the pictures I've got in my mind with real life, and then I begin to draw. It's really so hard to explain this kind of thing . . ."

"I don't expect you to make pretty speeches, my boy," said the professor, and his whole manner was perceptibly more kindly. "I would not have liked it if you had been too glib,

for I do not care for smooth-tongued people who speak in flourishes and highflown phrases, which are really empty and meaningless." Here Kolya couldn't help thinking of Victor.

"Listen as much as you can to the talk of simple folk," the professor went on. "Their speech has a sweep and a freedom belonging to the wide-open spaces. The consonants have a strong, steady ring like the voice of one who is strong, self-reliant, accustomed to forthright thinking and to speaking his mind without hedging. The vowels are sounded so freely that they seem to echo in the chest as if they were coming not from the throat alone but from the very heart. Ho-oo!"

The professor rose and, pushing out his broad chest, slapped it with both hands—and indeed the sound he made seemed to echo.

"Russian makes splendid use of all the possibilities of human language. It has no guttural, nasal or lisping sounds, but with hissing sounds it is quite at home. It is a language that has had fertile ground for growth—and plenty of space."

The professor gave a hearty, ringing laugh, sat plump down on the couch, and put an arm round Kolya, shaking him slightly.

"I've talked your head off, haven't I? But if only a little of what I've said sinks in, you'll profit greatly by it. An artist, too, must love language, must have a clear idea of how to use it. He must avoid florid phrases, for these, like all pretentiousness, are intolerable, both in art and science. They're like froth in a cup, making you think the cup's full when it's really half-empty, and you are not getting your money's worth."

Kolya listened, now and then jumping delightedly in his seat. The professor made him see familiar things in a new and unexpected light, and it was surprising to Kolya how much of

his talk was like the best of what he had gleaned from the remarks, opinions and hints of his parents and Sergei Nikolaevich. Listening, he realized that here was confirmation of the things he heard at home, at school and in the studio.

That day Kolya learned many interesting and astonishing facts: for example, that the dazzling white lights he saw when victory salutes were fired—and these now lit Moscow's skies very often—were produced by magnesium, the glowing crimson rockets were filled with strontium and the yellow-green with barium. The professor afterwards lighted a gas-burner, which stood on a small table resembling a joiner's bench, and demonstrated the changing colour of the flame; if it turned a deep red—this showed the presence of lithium, whereas an admixture of potassium gave the flame a purplish-blue shade.

The professor also showed Kolya a big geological map, with a dense patchwork of many-coloured spots and lines running in all directions, and he was surprised at the sharpness of Kolya's eyes; for no sooner had he heard the explanations than he was able quickly and accurately to point out the various geological systems marked.

Kolya learned also that vermilion, a colour he used so often, was an ore of mercury.

As he left the professor's house, carrying a supply of books on the earth's history, he overflowed with joyful gratitude. He walked homewards, thinking about all he had heard, but quite undaunted in his purpose. On the contrary, now the intention to continue his studies and to be as well versed in his field as the professor was in his, became strongly rooted in him.

Kolya had no idea that for a long time the professor gazed



Still Life, Flowers in a Glass. *Water-colour*

curiously after him from the window of his study. He leaned out far over the sill as the figure of the boy with the books under his arm disappeared round the corner.

Professor Gaiburov withdrew from the open window, drummed his stubby fingers on the pane and stood still for a while, his round head bent stubbornly to one side.

"Jolly good!" he summed up in a low voice. "Jolly good, upon my word. And what have you to say to that?"

He turned abruptly to face his son. But Yura, who a minute ago had been standing behind his father, was not there.

Snapping his fingers, the professor strode out of the study.

"Yura, where are you?"

His booming voice rang through the flat, but there was no answer. He went up to the small room occupied by his son. No sound came from behind the tightly shut door. The professor knocked.

A low voice answered: "Come in."

"What's the matter?" The professor went over to his son and looked intently at him.

The boy was sitting with his elbows on the desk, his fists pressed tightly against his temples. He let his clenched hands fall with a bang on the desk, flung himself back in his chair and, turning, looked up at his father.

"What a good-for-nothing!" he cried.

"Who is?" the professor asked in surprise.

Yura turned away.

"I am! Understand? I'm a good-for-nothing. To think that I tried to paint! Whew!"

Only then did the professor see that Yura's desk was littered with crumpled water-colours, grown yellow from lying about. It was not difficult to recognize in them Yura's

long-forgotten artistic efforts—coloured heavy sheets of paper—which he now eyed with disgust. The sheets, having been rolled, now crinkled and curled up again with a rustling sound.

“A good-for-nothing!” Yura repeated.

The professor flattened out one of the sheets.

“Yura, I think we settled long ago that you were not going to compete with Repin, so why go back to it now?”

“Drop it, Dad,” Yura protested, “you know well enough that it was never my ambition to become an artist. For a long time now I’ve been interested in quite different things. But it’s the feeling I have . . . Kolya is such a shrimp, and yet look what he’s got in him. As for me . . . Remember how all those old gentlemen, your colleagues, tried to encourage me: ‘Oh yes, most assuredly, he’s got the makings of an artist, ability . . .’”

The professor was looking fixedly at his son.

“Well, I never! I do believe you’ve been cherishing a secret hope that one day talent, like a gusher, will strike the surface.”

“Rubbish, Dad!” Yura was embarrassed and apologetic. “I never had any such hopes and you shouldn’t talk like that. But, to tell the truth, I found it pleasant to remember that I used to draw once. I’d get out the drawings, take a look at them, and they would seem quite decent to me. It sort of flattered my vanity to think that I had had some ability. Then art is a thing that you can’t drop altogether, for it keeps its hold on you. But now I haven’t a single illusion about my abilities as an artist. And I’m going to pitch every one of these drawings into the fire. Let them all burn.”

“If you’ve no more spirit than that, go ahead and do it,” said the professor, pushing Yura’s head with his broad palm.

"There was a time when I, too, longed to worship at the shrine of art. I had a voice that some people said was not bad at all. Indeed, there were friends who claimed I had the makings of an opera singer. A good thing I didn't take them at their word! And luckily there was a sensible fellow who did me a good turn by saying: 'Certainly, your voice has the quality of loudness. But the Volga boatmen have that quality to an even greater degree, and no one thinks of getting them to sing in opera.' For two years I felt I didn't want to see the inside of an opera house ever again. I decided I must forget I ever had a voice—I felt exactly as you do now. And I tell you it was foolish, for not everybody can sing. Some must listen, and there is no small delight in that. To listen, to appreciate, to enjoy talent is a splendid thing. Nor can everybody paint pictures, but some paint, and others look and derive pleasure from looking. I keep going to the opera, as you know, and I don't mind singing now and then for my own pleasure, without expecting to give pleasure to others. 'If you don't like my voice,' I say, 'don't listen, but don't prevent me from singing...' To make a long story short, Yura, stop being silly, and put the drawings back into your desk. You can find better fuel for the stove. And now let's sing our favourite song—come on..."

The professor raised his arms like a choir conductor. Yura, still frowning, but ready to smile condescendingly as he indulged his father's little weakness, took up the tune in his tenor voice. The professor chimed in with his bass, and father and son began to sing "No ships are asail on the sea." They sang well, for it was a song they had often sung together, and it sounded splendid.

When they had struck up "A storm will rise and we shall

fight and weather it" and the song came to an end they were silent for a while. Then the professor turned abruptly to face his son, and said softly, with something like an apology in his voice:

"What do you think of that Pioneer boy of yours? What accounts for a little chap like that having the powers he has, I don't know, but it's a marvellous thing indeed to have talent."

A sigh escaped father and son simultaneously.

Chapter 4

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

Kolya was admitted to the city art school.

He became a pupil of Mikhail Semyonovich Perutsky, artist and teacher, a tall man with reddish hair, and a modest, diffident manner. Mikhail Semyonovich always spoke in a gentle voice, and was never harsh, but Kolya, used to the good-natured, cordial Sergei Nikolayevich, found his new tutor very strict and exacting. Kolya's abilities as a draughtsman, for example, had always been praised, but here was Mikhail Semyonovich finding fault with his drawing.

"You must learn to draw properly," he said in his calm, even voice, making Kolya feel that he had never before been so severely taken to task. Gently but firmly Perutsky required of his pupils a perfect command of the laws and principles of drawing.

He was strongly averse to any cheap effects, requiring that in their drawing Kolya and his other pupils should put observation and a deep sense of relative values above everything

else. He was fond of telling the parable of a sculptor of old, chiselling a statue for a niche in a temple:

“‘Why do you take so much pains over the back of the statue, Master?’ the sculptor was asked. ‘It will stand in a niche and nobody will see the back.’ To this he replied: ‘God will see it.’”

“This shows,” said Kolya’s tutor, “how well the ancient sculptor knew the laws governing art and form. He understood that they were interdependent, and realized that any carelessness or lack of finish in parts not seen by the eye will affect the parts that *are* seen.”

At the art school Kolya heard more of Pavel Petrovich Chistyakov, whose name had been first mentioned to him by Professor Gaiburov. To stimulate Kolya’s interest in drawing, Mikhail Semyonovich would bring books on Chistyakov, reading aloud some of the less difficult passages from Chistyakov’s precepts with which apparently all artists were familiar. Kolya wrote down some of these in a note-book he kept especially for jotting down famous painters’ thoughts on art. His first entry was Chistyakov’s words “To draw means to think, to draw means to reason” which he had heard his teacher Perutsky repeat.

For Kolya himself the time had come to think and to reason things out. He could no longer fall back on his intuition, nor rely on inner promptings, but must now get a good grounding in his subjects. His thirst for knowledge was great, for knowledge, he felt, could bring him nearer to what promised to be the most essential thing in his life. And he looked up to Perutsky, his tutor, as one who had penetrated the deepest mysteries of art. Kolya had once been proud of what he could do with light and shade, but now it seemed to him a trivial

game for effect only. "Not rounded lines but the forms which they create within them must be drawn," he jotted down carefully in his note-book, and now it dawned on him why Mikhail Semyonovich was taking him so severely to task for his drawings. "Drawing is the foundation upon which the arts—painting, sculpture and architecture—are built."

"At the beginning many show talent, achieving effects with a certain vivaciousness, but that is not enough—that is not serious art. Talent and practice may suffice for illustrations and sketches, but not for serious pictures.

"To give adequate form to a serious idea, knowledge and craftsmanship are required."

Kolya now read avidly, borrowing books from the library and from Perutsky. There was much that he still could not grasp, but he was as delighted as if he had met a dear friend when he found Repin referring to Chistyakov as the "wise high priest of painting."

Kolya's note-book contained many quotations from the great masters.*

"Drawing is the source and soul of all forms of art and the root of every science. To him who has attained anything so great as the mastery of drawing, I would say: 'You own a precious treasure'" (Michelangelo).

"Observe that the most perfect guide, leading through a triumphal arch to art, is drawing from life. This is more important than copying. Trust in it wholeheartedly, especially after you have acquired a certain feeling for drawing" (Cennino Cennini).

* Quotations from note-books belonging to Kolya Dmitriev are cited above. All letters, documents and entries from diaries occurring later are also quoted from the originals. — — *Author's note.*

"You should apply yourself first of all to drawing in order to present to the eye in visible form the purpose and invention created originally in your imagination; . . . and make the proportions and size in accordance with perspective, so that no part of the work remains that is not counselled by reason and by the effects in nature. This is the way to make yourself renowned in your art" (Leonardo da Vinci).

"Colour is my constant preoccupation, but drawing is my constant care" (Delacroix).

Kolya delved more and more deeply into books, always finding something new in them or something to confirm discoveries he had already made himself. Thus, for instance, the wisdom of Perutsky's strict teaching was corroborated by something he read in a book by Repin: "With lines alone you can make your drawing stand out, if only the lines are in the right place." Kolya discovered for himself that when he drew an object faithfully and thoroughly, observing the magic laws of perspective, which he had discovered by accident long ago and only now was consciously applying, his drawing stood out on the paper without subsequent shading. It was all extremely interesting. What unexpected but obvious associations could be discovered in objects, in life, in people, in everything, if one approached these with a trained eye and a mind eager to explore.

Kolya delighted in sprinkling his conversation now and then with some of Chistyakov's sayings. For example, to one whose drawing was not up to the mark he would say: "There is something of the style of a suit-case in that thing of yours." Chistyakov had passed this remark about Delaroche's famous painting "Cromwell at the Tomb of Charles I." One of his own unsuccessful drawings he could in the Chistyakov manner

contemptuously term "Oven-Door." The personality of Pavel Petrovich Chistyakov, great artist and teacher of Repin, Vasnetsov, Polenov, Vrubel, Surikov and Serov, was getting an even stronger hold on Kolya's imagination. And the names of all these great painters now came to mean much to him. The Tretyakov Art Gallery, where their famous pictures were kept, was still closed; and it worried Kolya that he had never been in it. He only knew these fine painters from reproductions, lithographs, and picture postcards. This was not the serious way of knowing them and he felt it keenly.

It comforted him a little when Professor Gaiburov, whom he dropped in to see from time to time, told him of something that he had read in Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya's reminiscences of Lenin. It appeared that in the most trying years of the revolution Lenin, having no time to frequent art galleries, used to borrow from Vorovsky a pile of illustrated reviews of the works of various artists, and the few hours of leisure which he could snatch, he would spend on reading the reviews and looking at the illustrations.

All the same Kolya waited impatiently for the day when the war would be over and the Tretyakov Art Gallery would be reopened. Then he would at last be able to see the originals of the famous pictures which he knew so well from reproductions only.

Sometimes Kolya would come home from art school all red and dishevelled, his blue eyes restless and blinking nervously.

"Got into trouble again?" they asked him at home.

With a guilty nod Kolya would admit that he had.

But nothing could shake his love of drawing. It only grew stronger; and he would turn to his drawing with greater eagerness and stubbornness. It was no easy thing to give up



A Tiger Gnawing at a Bone

a game in the yard and sit at home with the football bounding beneath the window. Zhenya, who had for some time been attending trade school and always managed to earn a little money, would often treat the boys in the yard to caramels or take them to the pictures. But Kolya did not go, for there was more drawing to be done. The goal he had set himself was even at such moments more attractive than the many temptations of the yard. To draw had become a wonderful duty and he literally sweated over his drawing so that his people at home would say: "All right, go and sweat at it a bit."

When his mother came home from work in the evening, she would ask Kolya: "Been sweating at it today?" And he would reply with satisfaction: "I should say I have."

A misfortune overtook the family. Kolya's father fell seriously ill. He had been unwell for some time, suffering from acute pains in his eyes and from fits of giddiness. Then he had caught cold which turned to flu, and fearful and unexpected complications set in. Early one morning, after they were all up, Dad sat on one of the beds and asked in a strangely loud voice:

"What's happened? What's the time? Why are you all up in the middle of the night? You might at least turn the light on. Natalia! Kolya! Katya! Why don't you say something?"

Natalia Nikolayevna rushed to her husband, put her hands on his temples and peered into his face.

Kolya understood. His father had gone blind.

The doctors were hopeful, assuring the family that the

blindness would pass. The eyes were not really affected, and the sight would probably return. But Kolya looked in anguish at his father's face, at the familiar but now blank, unseeing eyes, and would sit at his bedside hour after hour.

The illness dragged on. Kolya could not bear to think that his father would never again see the drawings he made. He even fell into a mood which made drawing seem pointless and useless. Had not Dad always been his best critic and adviser? Was it worth going on with his drawing now? He missed two or three lessons at the art school.

Somehow or other the Striganovs had got wind of Kolya's troubles, and Zhenya came to see him on Saturday evening. He stood shifting his weight from one foot to the other, and then motioned to Kolya to come into the passage.

"Kolya, I've something to say to you. Only don't let's have any fancy talk like: 'I beg your pardon,' 'much obliged'—and all that. Agreed?"

"What's the matter?" Kolya asked uneasily.

Zhenya, clearing his throat, held out a clenched hand to Kolya and, opening it, showed several crumpled ten-ruble notes in his broad palm that had metal dust under the skin.

"Take it, Kolya. I got my pay today. You can buy some paints with it. Things aren't so easy with you now, are they? Don't worry, my Dad knows. I told him and he said I'm doing the right thing, so take it. When your Dad recovers, you'll pay it back—but there's no hurry."

Kolya took Zhenya's hand and bent its fingers slowly but insistently, closing them over the money again.

"Thanks, Zhenya," he said. "If ever I need it, I'll ask you for it."

One evening Natalia Nikolayevna, tired, worried, and feeling not too well herself, sat gazing sadly at Kolya and Katya, who were busy doing their homework. Fyodor Nikolayevich was asleep, and it was very quiet in the flat. Suddenly an overpowering alarm for her children clutched at the mother's heart.

"What will become of you?" she said in a whisper. "I feel ill myself, and your father can't work. Suppose you are left quite alone?"

Katya, rosy-cheeked and chubby, went up to her mother with a serious face, her forehead wrinkled gravely.

"You mustn't worry, Mummy," she said, taking her mother's hand. "It's going to be all right, so don't you start thinking things. And even if something were to happen, we could look after ourselves. Look how well Kolya draws—he could get orders . . . And I can wash and cook."

Kolya was grimly silent.

"And what do you think about it, Kolya?" asked his mother cautiously.

Still he did not speak.

"Why don't you say something, Kolya?"

"There are things," said Kolya, and his voice broke, "things I can't . . . I *won't* think of them happening."

He turned away, then rose and went quickly out of the room.

His mother rushed after him and found him at the front door. He was standing on the stairs in the cold, his forehead pressed against the wall. She put her arms round him and drew him to her. He pressed a wet cheek against hers and, trembling all over, whispered into her ear: "Never ask me that again, please! I can't think about things without seeing them before my eyes as if they were real . . ."

Kolya now found it hard to answer his father's questions about his lessons with Perutsky.

Previously Kolya would reply by sketching briefly on a piece of paper what he had been drawing at school, but now he had only words to fall back on. In the evening Dad never failed to ask what they had done at the lesson and he always listened attentively as Kolya went into long explanations of the objects he had painted and how they were placed. Kolya was sorry now that he had given up studying music, for he might have played for Dad to hear him and rejoice in his progress, instead of Dad's having to take him at his word and certainly feeling deeply the fact that he could not follow his son's progress with his own eyes.

Kira, for whose friendship Kolya felt a great need now, was greatly astonished one day to hear faint sounds of piano playing from the room where he was waiting for her. Kolya was quietly playing scales with the soft pedal on. As Kira entered the room, he quickly drew his hands away from the keys.

"Decided to practise?" she asked.

Kolya shook his lowered head.

"No, I just wondered if I had forgotten everything. I still remember something but my fingers are as stiff as sticks. It was a mistake to give up music, for I could have played for Dad now."

He confided his troubles to Kira, who seemed to understand. She sat thinking for a while, then tossed her head back, screwing up her eyes.

"If he believes in you as I do," she said rapidly, "he'll know, even though he can't see that you are trying hard for his sake. He can't help knowing your nature."

She read much in the grateful glance which she could feel on her face before her eyes were wide open again.

On Sunday morning a sturdy lad in a military tunic with crimson shoulder-straps came to see Zhenya. He was Andrei Smykov, a boy who during the war had been adopted by a Guards' regiment and had recently been sent to Moscow to study music. The boys from all over the yard rushed up to hear him tell how he had fought on the First Ukrainian Front.

"I was commended by the Commander-in-Chief for that," said Andrei Smykov in his husky voice.

"I say, d'you mean you personally?" Zhenya was astonished.

"It was in an order we got—'to all the troops of the front.' That includes me, doesn't it?" said Andrei Smykov.

How Kolya envied him! Here was a boy who had not frittered away his time! He had been in action—and now he was learning to play the trumpet. When the war was over and there would be parades in the Red Square again, Andrei Smykov would be there, of course, playing his trumpet in front of the ranks of heroes.

Kolya was extremely fond of music, which Leonardo da Vinci called "the sister of painting." He could stand for hours with his ear to the muffled loudspeaker, listening to a concert. The day he came home after having met Andrei Smykov in the yard, Kolya sat reading aloud to his father from Alexei Tolstoi's *Peter the First*. He read so long that the men of Peter's time, in their colourful robes, as they were described in the book, seemed to crowd before his eyes. The strains of Mozart's *Requiem* came over the air. Kolya stopped reading, and father and son sat listening to the music. With a mournful,

sweeping majesty, it grieved over lost ones, and offered comfort for all great sorrows; its powerful strains seemed to ring through the whole world. Later, when Dad fell asleep, Kolya went on tiptoe to his table and sat for a long time, absorbed and silent, working over a new drawing.

"Are you there, Kolya?" asked Dad, waking from his doze. "What are you doing over there?"

Kolya slipped his drawing under a book, forgetting that Dad could not see it anyway.

"Just drawing. I want to do an illustration to *Peter the First*."

And to ease his conscience, he really began sketching the ponderous figure of Peter, and the shaven, beardless boyars, dressed in the German fashion of the time.

Often, holding before his father's unseeing eyes a newly-finished picture, Kolya would silently entreat: "See it! See it!" He longed so much for Dad to get back his sight that at times he almost believed the power of his will would indeed help to remove the dark veil which prevented his father's eyes from seeing.

Chapter 5

VICTORY! VICTORY!

The day came when the dark veil dropped. It happened first one evening when Dad, turning his face towards a lamp on the table, said abruptly and uncertainly:

"Wait a minute . . . my dears. I believe I'm getting back my sight!"

The doctor's orders were for him to lie in a darkened room for three more days. On the fourth, Fyodor Nikolayevich had, beyond all doubt, completely regained his eyesight. Having gazed

his fill at the beloved faces round him, at Natalia Nikolayevna, at Kolya and Katya, he said:

"Kolya, son, let me look . . ." Emotion made him pause at the last word, which for so long he had not used. "Let me look," he repeated, "at what you've been doing all this time."

Kolya showed his father the drawings he had done at school and some random sketches of scenes from the life and labour of ordinary people, well captured by his observant eye and put down on paper by a trained hand. There were sketches of the laundry to which Mother had sent Kolya during his father's illness, of working people on their way home from factories, of an old woman with a market-basket, of Moscovites leaning over railings along the quay to watch the floating ice in the chill March wind. Kolya also showed the big drawing he had done for *Peter the First*. It was an illustration to the chapters he had been reading to his father. Fyodor Nikolayevich was amazed to see how firm Kolya's hand had grown and how bold had become the imagination of the persevering young artist since he had last seen his son's drawings.

"And what may that be?" enquired Fyodor Nikolayevich as he held up a drawing of a grey-haired, bearded man, bundled in a coat with the collar turned up, and felt boots on his feet.

The man was seated at the piano on an old-fashioned stool with curved legs. On the piano top stood a makeshift lamp: a wick stuck into a little bottle with paraffin. The surroundings spoke of gloom, cold and want. But the elderly musician with the strong fingers of his large, nobly moulded hands was striking—one could feel it—powerful and imperious chords. He sat with hollow, unshaven cheeks and unkempt hair, leaving no doubt as to his great age and his exhaustion. Yet he was so engrossed in the music that neither cold nor hunger meant

anything to him. In the chill gloom, which the dim light from the wick could not disperse, he was oblivious of everything except what was burning in his own heart.

"It's the *Requiem*," said Kolya. "My idea, Dad, was to show Leningrad at the time of the blockade. You see the man's all alone in the empty house, in cold and the dark. He is playing the *Requiem* for those who gave their lives. He plays knowing that we will win the war. I drew it that time we heard the *Requiem* over the radio. Remember? I didn't want to tell you about it then."

At last came the day which could truthfully be called one of the happiest in the lives of the Soviet people. A week before a salute had been fired to honour the Soviet troops who had captured fascist Berlin and raised the Red Flag over the Reichstag. It was then clear to all that the war was coming to an end, that the long-awaited day, to which all Soviet people had been looking forward, the day seen in a million dreams, the day of jubilation, when the last banner bearing the hated swastika should fall at the feet of the conquerors, was at hand. And now it had come. The previous night, those who had got back their wireless sets had heard the news which spread over the globe in the languages of all the nations, war-weary and peace-hungry: "*Hitler est mort*," "*Hitler ist tot*," "Hitler is dead."

Nobody went to sleep on the eve of the 9th of May. Wireless sets were left on as everyone waited to hear at any moment the great news of final victory. Even Katya stayed up, although she was overcome by sleep and banged her forehead several times against the table where, along with the others, she sat patiently waiting.



An Illustration to a Fable by Krylov

In the night came a crackling sound from the loudspeaker, and Kolya heard of the defeat of Hitler's troops at Moscow's gates. And now something was rustling and stirring in the throat of the loudspeaker, the loudspeaker to which they had all listened so eagerly through the war years. And the voice of the announcer, which had so often broadcast the orders of the Supreme Command and which had grown so familiar in those difficult days, proclaimed that the war was over and won. Fascist Germany had capitulated.

Could anyone think of going to bed after that? Kolya stood at the window, looking out into the yard—the black-out hangings had been removed a week before—and saw the spring sky brightening before the dawn.

Here, in this yard, the war had begun for Kolya four years ago. And now the war was over. A kind of sweet, long-absent peace seemed to have descended on the yard, especially at the corner by the porch, so often drawn by Kolya, where through the darkness he could almost make out the trunk of the old oak-tree. Soon it would be breaking into leaf again.

Everywhere there were voices and the quick, springing footsteps of joyous people. Lights from the many windows of the house lit the yard: no one was asleep.

Just then Kolya heard a ring at the front door and a knocking. He rushed downstairs to open the door—it was his Pioneer leader, Yura Gaiburov.

“Dad and I were passing and saw your lights on. We're off to the Red Square. No use trying to sleep on a night like this. Why not come along with us and watch the sunrise? Will they let you go? Dad's waiting in the street.”

Kolya, of course, was allowed to go; there was no refusing him on such a night. He remembered the time, four years ago,

when Zhenya and he had wanted to go along with Kostya Yermakov on the annual visit of boy and girl graduates to the Red Square. Then he had not been allowed to go. Now Kostya was no more. He had given his life to bring about this great, long-awaited night when no one in Moscow could sleep for happiness.

The sky was quite blue by the time they came to the Red Square. The cold, dreamy shadows of the night, wrapped in a mysterious gloom, still lingered beneath the grey-blue branches of the fir-trees by the Kremlin walls. The stars on the Kremlin towers—their protective war coverings recently removed—shone bright against the whitish sky with the dawn breaking. And motionless, as if themselves cast in granite, stood the sentries, face to face, at the entrance to the Lenin Mausoleum.

Despite the early hour, the crowds were rapidly swelling in the Red Square. In the dawn the square looked more solemn and majestic than ever, and the vistas to be seen from its flat surface seemed so boundless that people involuntarily spoke in hushed tones, exchanging congratulations and greetings. The hum of voices carried with it a flow of suppressed emotion.

The first sunbeams came from across the Moskva River and touched the top of the Spasskaya Tower, as if with a magic wand. All at once the tower gleamed, golden and rosy. And, as if in obedience to the wand, the last shades of night vanished, and morning, gay, resonant, triumphant, skipped down the steps of the tuneful arpeggios played by the Kremlin chimes. Pink and gold clouds went scurrying across the heavens at the sun's touch, and the sky turned a deep blue; the first cheer

of this glorious day rolled over the Red Square, now flooded with the light of the early spring sunrise.

"This is a morning we must never forget," said Professor Gaiburov. "Some day, Kolya, you'll be telling your grandchildren how you saw the sun rise in the Red Square on Victory Day. You might even draw a picture of it—what do you say?"

"Eh, what do you say to drawing a picture of it?" Professor Gaiburov repeated. "Only don't attempt it before you attain real vigour and know what you are about. You artists . . ."

Kolya felt a glow of pride and warmth steal over him to hear Yura's father rank him among the glorious company of artists.

"You artists," continued Professor Gaiburov, "help the people to understand beauty, the beauty of the earth, which now belongs to the people. There is the new beauty of the human soul. Our land is beautiful today as it is, but there are no words to describe what it will be like tomorrow. What artists a land like that ought to have—think of it, lad!"

"Did you ever go in for art yourself?" Kolya asked suddenly.

The professor inclined his broad face, which was even rosier than usual from the reflected glow of the sun.

"What made you ask that, all of a sudden? Was I getting poetic? Well, why not? After all science and poetry are sisters, even if one belongs to the realm of knowledge and reason and the other to the realm of feeling and imagination. The artist needs to know a good deal, and the scientist without feeling or imagination is of no earthly use. A prominent Chinese Communist I once met said that reason is the highest form of feeling. But you're still too young to understand that, although

you are an artist, my dear lad. If you think I'm up in the clouds you're mistaken—as you know, my profession calls for digging in the ground. As for you artists, it's not a bad idea for you to dig into firm ground, too."

Sleep was sweet that morning—the first morning after the end of the war.

The day was indeed an exceptional one. In the evening, when dusk fell, the last gun salute of the Great Patriotic War thundered above the capital. The sky blazed as thousands of guns were fired. Rockets let loose a wealth of multicoloured stars above the city, as Kolya, along with Dad, Mother, Katya and the inevitable Zhenya, elbowed their way among the jubilant crowds in the Red Square. In the crush the boys were separated from Kolya's family and carried off by the swelling, bubbling human stream. They were in the midst of hundreds of thousands of merry-makers who packed every bit of the square, from the parapets of the bridge across the Moskva River to the Moscow Hotel. Never before had the capital been so irrepressibly happy. Complete strangers clasped hands as they walked; soon a ring was formed and the crowds whirled round and round, with ever more people being irresistibly drawn in.

Kolya, fascinated, did not know which way to look. At the crowd? At the houses, brightly coloured by the festive lights? At the sky?

A giant pergola of scarlet, blue and purple spotlights reached into the clouds from beyond Moscow horizons, from the Sadovaya Circle and the boulevards. A thousand voices broke into a cheer which rolled in stentorian waves from street to street, and from square to square.

The thunder of saluting guns pealed steadily. Garlands of rockets, gold, crimson and green, shot into the air, scattering over the roofs. Very high in the sky, caught in the criss-cross of the searchlights, and standing out against the iridescent light, the scarlet flame of a tremendous red banner, emblem of a righteous and victorious cause, was borne by the invisible cable of a barrage balloon.

Just then Kolya noticed a lean youth, standing not far from him, with his head thrown back and his wide-open eyes reflecting the dancing, many-coloured lights. His face was tormentingly familiar to Kolya. Suddenly he remembered—the beginning of the war, the first bombings, a blind boy feeling the clammy, insect-like body of the fascist bomber in Sverdlov Square. Was it the same boy? Had he really recovered his sight and could he with his own eyes see the light of justice triumphant? Kolya rushed towards him, but was soon flung to one side and whirled round by the stream of people. With some difficulty he found Zhenya who had fallen behind. It was certainly the same lad, the very same one, Kolya kept assuring himself.

He was caught in a whirlpool of gaiety, laughter and shouts. A girl perched on a loose stone, bent towards the friend on whose shoulder she was leaning to keep her balance. "Look at it, Zina!" she cried. "The banner, it was sewn at our shop. Our girls did it. It's beautiful, isn't it? Guess how many yards it took to make it?"

"How many?" Zhenya, with his fondness for facts and figure, asked quickly. But the crowds had swallowed up the girl.

"Eh, some searchlights; grand, aren't they?" cried someone

else. "Who do you think installed the electric equipment? Our plant did. Do you know what the candle-power of each one is?"

Just as Zhenya was on the point of finding out the candle-power of the searchlights, a girl began to shout. Waving her beret, which she had pulled off her flying hair, she screamed:

"Comrades, Comrades, there's a Hero of the Soviet Union. We're fellow-students at the University. He's a hero, take my word for it. Make him unfasten his coat. He's got decorations all across his chest."

Kolya and Zhenya plunged into the crowd to get a closer view of the Hero and, if possible, count his decorations. But the Hero was already being tossed into the air by dozens of hands. Then a youngster in an army tunic with red shoulder-straps—perhaps a schoolfellow of Andrei Smykov, the boy who had been adopted by a Guards' regiment and whom Kolya had envied so much—ran past, shouting:

"Vasya-aa. Let's go to Manezhnaya Square! There's music there. Some band! Enormous! And they're all from our school, all boys I know. There are two hundred trumpeters and ever so many drummers."

But Kolya and Zhenya could not go and count the drummers, for the throng now flung them in another direction. Among the crowds of people singing, dancing, congratulating and hugging each other, the two boys felt as much part of the festivities as anybody else. All the people here were friends and comrades who by common effort had won victory and were now deservedly and generously sharing in its glory.

Chapter 6

A VERY REAL THING

In everything there was that flowing roundness of line, inherent in nature, which is visible only to the eye of the creative artist and comes out as angles in the work of the copyist.

N. GOGOL

The happiness of the day before had not yet faded when Kolya had something else to rejoice about. His grandmother visited them, looking very triumphant as she announced that the Tretyakov Gallery would reopen on Sunday.

Kolya fairly squealed with delight, but at once restrained himself, for what chance would there be of getting a ticket? But here the astute Granny, waiting a while to heighten the effect, fumbled in her neat, well-worn bag and produced a ticket for the opening which she had managed to get for Kolya.

Sunday was only two days away but to Kolya they seemed like two years. At last it came. Washed, brushed, with the tuft of hair on his crown smoothed down somehow, and with a white collar over his jacket, Kolya set off with his grandmother for the Tretyakov Art Gallery, where he was to have gone four years before but for the war.

They passed two bronze footballers, locked in a dizzy, grappling embrace upon the pedestal behind the gallery's railing and vainly trying to wrest the ball from each other, and at last found themselves in the crowded vestibule.

It seemed to Kolya that everybody was speaking far too loudly. He could not understand how anyone could possibly raise his voice in the gallery. He himself was silent, keeping a

tight hold on his grandmother's hand in case they would lose each other in the crowded halls which held the treasures he had long dreamed of seeing.

At first Kolya could glimpse little but the backs and heads of other people, although he was tall for his age. He saw only the pictures which were hung very high, and the glass ceiling, with May sunshine streaming softly and jubilantly through it. Then the crowds gradually dispersed through the gallery and Kolya was able to see the pictures he wanted most to look at. First of all, his grandmother led him through the halls containing the works of the old masters of Russia. Among these were icons with dismal countenances covered with a cracked layer of olive-coloured varnish. On them soared tapering figures, outlined in soft, sweeping contours, the colours faded from age.

Telling Kolya that he would have to see a good deal that day, his grandmother stopped in front of only two of the icon panels. The first of these was the icon of Our Lady of Vladimir. Grandmother said the icon was over eight hundred years old and could well compare with Raphael's madonnas. But at that time Kolya was not interested in the old masters, nor did he know much about Raphael, though he could readily believe that he was a great painter. The icon of Our Lady of the Don, in the next room, which, tradition has it, had been on the Kulikovo field during Dmitri Donskoi's famous battle against Mamai, produced a far greater impression on Kolya. He learned, too, that Tsar Ivan Grozny sat thinking out his plans in front of this icon the night before he marched on Kazan, in 1552, four centuries ago. Painted by an old master, it ranked among the great works of art of that period. The icon called to mind much of what Kolya had read and loved in the history books, and he

felt an instinctive respect for the anonymous painter who had created it.

But he was happiest of all when they climbed several flights of a broad, slanting staircase to reach the gallery's upper floor. Here, at every step, Kolya experienced the delight of meeting old friends. He had long ago released his hand from his grandmother's grip, and he darted from one side of the hall to the other, from picture to picture, crying out with pleasure each time he saw some fine example of Russian art long known to him from books and magazines. His grandmother was run off her feet, trying to keep up with him. He went on and on, from room to room, from the pictures of one artist to those of another, naming each work. He recognized them from afar, like old friends, patrons and powerful kindred thinkers to whom he had always been devoted and whom at last he was meeting.

"Look! Granny, look! Boyarinya Morozova! And there's the execution of the streltsi! I've read so much about it! Granny, come here! Ivan Grozny and his son! And here are the three bogatyrs. How enormous they are! Why, they're giants! I didn't think they were so big. And look at poor Alyonushka sitting there!" He felt like crying out to the pictures:

"Hullo! So that's what you're like!"

They were not at all like the lithographs and copies of them that he had seen. The exquisite harmony of colour stood out as if the pictures had been washed by rain or a thick, dull glass had been removed from them. Unsuspected lights were revealed in the very shadows, which were not black at all, and the figures of living beings appeared to be softer and warmer. Hard objects became more clearly and sharply defined, draperies, on the contrary, seemed to fall softly. The living stood out from the inanimate, the colours came to life as if the pictures had

been brought from dim lamplight into the light of day. Everything took new form and vitality and was bathed in the clear atmosphere in which, as Kolya only now realized, the originals lived and breathed.

And to think that a giftless draughtsman, a blood-thirsty dauber with the glassy stare of a drowned man, had tried to deprive him of all this, to drown in blood all that was beautiful in the world.

Kolya, overawed, lapsed again into silence in the Levitan and Serov rooms. For about ten minutes at a stretch he stood in a kind of sweet trance in front of "Golden Waters," "The Girl with Peaches" and "Overgrown Pond."

Grandmother said something to him, and then was forced to tug his sleeve to get him to move on. Without saying a word, he released himself from her hold, his lower lip quivering strangely. Then his trance broken, he turned to his grandmother with a far-away look which came gradually nearer as if he were returning from another world.

Quite himself again, he led her back to the hall of the old masters. With amused and sympathetic interest he stood before "The Youthful Artist" by Ivan Firsov, an eighteenth century painter. It was a picture of a boy of Kolya's age, who, with an easel in front of him, was drawing a little girl, apparently his sister. The girl was obviously bored and would have run away long ago if her mother, embracing her, had not persuaded her to pose a little longer. "Just like Figgimigigit," thought Kolya, remembering how he would beg his sister to sit for him. The young artist in the picture seemed to be having a tough time of it. Dishevelled but determined, he sat on the edge of

his stool, looking sternly at his model; one foot, which had probably gone stiff, he supported against the foot-rest of the easel. The picture appealed deeply to Kolya, for, although it had been painted two centuries ago, the artist had captured something very close and familiar to Kolya. "See if I don't draw a picture of Katya," he said to himself.

But when he returned from the gallery, the very first thing he did was to remove his own drawings from the wall. For two or three days he left his pencil alone. Neither persuasion nor scolding had any result. On the third day he asked Mother for some money and after school went to the Tretyakov Gallery with Kira, Nadya and their mother. Kolya liked the pictures even better than on his first visit when he had been rather overwhelmed by what he saw. He showed Kira what he regarded as his favourite pictures and was pleased when she, too, preferred them to the others. Quite unexpectedly, their opinions tallied. The next Sunday he again went to the gallery. This time his companions were Professor Gaiburov and Yura. They spent nearly a whole day there. Kolya came home weary but cheered, spent a long time making entries in his note-book, and, before going to bed, carefully sharpened all his pencils.

Some time afterwards he persuaded Zhenya to come with him to the gallery, with which, by then, he felt he had grown quite familiar. Zhenya, though he respected Kolya for being able to draw as he did, had been quite convinced that the only pictures worth seeing were motion pictures. But since Kolya was so insistent, Zhenya thought he might as well go and see what it was all about.

Kolya had by this time read a good many books about artists and pictures and had heard countless stories about art from both Perutsky and Professor Gaiburov. And as he guided his

overawed chum through the gallery, Zhenya's baffled gaze straying in all directions, Kolya mentioned casually that Levitan had painted his "Deep Waters" after visiting the estate of Baroness Wulf, and that Pushkin in his time had been there, too. The story of the unlucky girl who had drowned herself in the pond on the estate had given Pushkin the idea for his "Mermaid." And Levitan had painted that very pond. When they came to Rokotov's portraits, Kolya took the opportunity of informing Zhenya:

"The great-great—I don't know how many 'greats'—granddaughter of Rokotov lives in Moscow. She writes, but under a man's name—Altayev. Remember our reading *Under the Banner of the Boot*? That's hers. She's a very brave woman, too. Once there was a lieutenant called Schmidt, a revolutionary, and one of his sailors, a revolutionary too, had been sentenced to death, and she hid him in her house."

Kolya took Zhenya to see Yakobi's "The Convicts' Halt" and told him that the woman in the foreground of the picture, nursing her infant, was drawn from the gallant Alexandra Toliverova-Peshkova, who was in Italy and knew Garibaldi. She had saved the life of Garibaldi's wounded aide-de-camp, and one of his red-shirted followers presented her with a red shirt stained with blood.

Zhenya was amazed at Kolya's knowledge, wondering how he could remember all those things. As to Kolya, his eyes shone with delight as he led his friend from room to room, taking him close up to the pictures, then making him step back, squat, narrow his eyes, shut one eye and form his fists into a telescope to hold against the other eye.

Zhenya was not one to go into raptures over anything. He viewed the pictures with interest. Some he recognized himself,

Russia before Peter I



even before Kolya had a chance to speak about them. But Kolya, who had expected the famous gallery to produce a greater impression on his chum, was rather disappointed.

Kolya having bought pastry in the refreshment room with the change his mother gave him for bus fares, and Zhenya being out of funds just before pay-day, there was nothing they could do but walk home, although they were footsore from wandering through the rooms of the gallery.

As they walked along the embankment, an overgrown lad with long arms sticking out of his sleeves caught up with them. He shuffled along with head pushed forward as if he had just been punched in the neck or had slid down a hill. Pausing at the street corner, he stared dully at a big poster and then, for no obvious reason, with a movement of his long arm, tore a long strip from it.

"Gosh, what a parasite!" Zhenya muttered under his breath and, before Kolya had a chance to reply, he made a dash for the lad, who sauntered off, waving the poster strip, as though he had done the most natural thing in the world.

Kolya saw Zhenya overtake him.

"You ignoramus!" cried Zhenya. "You big goggle-eyed fool! An artist has worked over this, drawn it for the people, and you spoil his work!"

"What's that to you? Run along!"

"Not before you feel the weight of this!" Zhenya raised his fist and shook it at him. The other made ready to retaliate the blow.

Kolya hastened to his friend's assistance.

"How d'ye like that?" Zhenya said. "Here is a fine poster on the wall, catching the eye of passers-by and pleasing them, and who should come but this good-for-nothing with his

hands itching to destroy things. What he needs is a good punch."

"Why don't you leave a fellow alone?" the lad whimpered. "How many more are there of you? It's not fair..."

"There are plenty of us," Zhenya cut him short, "but there aren't many ignorant louts like you. Hold him tight, Kolya," he ordered. Kolya caught the fellow by his sleeves and held on to him. "Take him back to the poster and let him paste in place the piece he tore."

Encouraged by well-aimed prods in the back, the big lanky fellow reached the corner where the torn poster hung with a white slit gaping across it.

"What will I paste it on with?" he whined.

"That's your headache!" Zhenya retorted. "Didn't think of that when you tore it, did you? Go ahead—glue it on."

"Well, you might use spittle," Kolya suggested. With Kolya and Zhenya looking on, the lanky youth spat at the torn poster strip, and even licked it. Squirming and looking apprehensively at the two lads, he pasted the torn slip in place.

"Say, you haven't a pin, have you?" he asked, obviously entering into the spirit of the job.

Zhenya who could be relied upon to have on his person almost anything that might be needed produced not one but two pins. The torn strip was fastened so thoroughly that the poster looked quite whole again.

"Well, that's how I like things," said the approving Zhenya. "Now you can go. Hurry along and don't you make a nuisance of yourself again. Fellows go and get educated, work, draw, while you—swish, slash—and ruin their pictures. See that you have more sense next time."

Zhenya added weight to his words by clenching his hands on the fingers of which Kolya noticed a few stains.

"What's that?" he asked.

Zhenya unclenched his hands and looked at one of them, broad and strong like his father's.

"That? Acid stains I got at the factory today. And this is a file cut."

Admiringly, Kolya eyed his chum's open hand—the acid stains deep in the skin of the strong fingers, the file cut, the horny, wax-coloured bumps. Yes, these were "hands with a job," as Zhenya's father used to say. And Kolya had noticed that of late Zhenya made free use of many technical terms. Clearly he was becoming technically-minded and knew what he was about in life. Kolya looked now at his own hands. "And me—what have I got to show for myself?" he thought. "Nothing but an ultramarine stain, not washed off properly, and an ink spot from written work at school yesterday. Rub these well, and they'll come off at once." Then furtively he touched the purplish hollow on his middle finger and not without pleasure felt a slight hardening from his pencil. Well, that meant that his hands also could account for some work done.

That night, before going to bed, Kolya had a long talk with Dad. To start it off, Kolya had prepared beforehand what he thought would be quite a poser.

"Dad, what do you think is more important—doing real things or depicting them?"

Dad seemed to guess at once the drift of the question.

"Kolya, my boy, what a dreadful casuist you are!"

"And what's a casuist?"

"A kind of befuddler, confusing things that are quite clear

and getting entangled in non-existent intricacies. You, Kolya, are funny. It's really amusing, the way you put your question."

"Dad, you know our long-standing agreement. I've got my right every evening to ask any question I please, and it is up to you to answer it. You're not playing fair, you know."

"I've every intention of playing fair. I'll answer the question at once, especially as it is not at all a difficult one. You haven't a proper understanding of what art means, my dear boy, nor have you the respect you should have for something to which you are devoting so much of your time. First of all, what do you mean by 'real things'?"

"Well, take Zhenya. He's serving his turner's apprenticeship and he's already operating a lathe. He makes all kinds of machine parts; he showed them to me and they're fine, heavy, smooth. You take one in your hand and you feel—'Now that's a real thing, a useful thing.'"

"And what about the pictures you've seen at the Tretyakov Art Gallery, aren't they 'real things'? Evidently a real thing to you is something which exists in life, acting, living and working for the good of man. Am I right?"

Kolya nodded briefly. Half lying down, supporting himself on elbows thrust behind him, with head tensely drawn in between angular shoulders, sticking out from his sleeveless jersey, he listened intently.

"Of course the 'real things' you mean," his father went on, "should be valued most by us, for they are fundamental. But the artist by his work helps people to distinguish between the real and the false. It is then that every work of art, or, as you would call it, a 'depiction,' that is truthful and potent, influences life, joining the ranks of 'real things,' as you term them,

and holding an honourable place in these ranks. Belinsky said that 'art must study, reflect life and rival it.'"

"I thought as much myself, Dad," Kolya said. "But you know, there are times when one gets confused and one's head is in a muddle."

"So you see, Kolya, you understand very well yourself all there is to understand about 'real things.' Only you must wait till you grow up and learn a good deal. Then 'real things' will begin for you."

"Dad, and do you truly believe that I shall get real things done by and by?" asked Kolya with trepidation.

"I'm certain you will. Now you had better sleep. No more talking."

Chapter 7

A DECISION IS TAKEN

Fyodor Nikolayevich knew well enough what "real things" his son dreamed of accomplishing when he spoke of them that night. The father, anxious to make certain that his son was not mistaken in the road he had mapped out for himself, resolved to seek the advice of his cousin, Vladimir Vladimirovich Dmitriev, an eminent artist and chief scenic designer at the Moscow Art Theatre. The matter was urgent, and so Fyodor Nikolayevich, overcoming the extreme shyness for which the Dmitriev family was noted, and which had formerly prevented him from taking counsel with his celebrated cousin, went to see him at once.

Vladimir Vladimirovich Dmitriev looked long and attentively at Kolya's drawings, going through them thoughtfully, placing some on the table before him, putting others aside and picking them up again.

"Why have you kept all this from me?" he scolded, gathering up the drawings. "You're a queer chap, Fyodor, upon my word you are. You should have come running to me a long time ago. I don't choose to talk to you about these. Bring the boy himself and I'll tell him whatever there is to say. Let him bring as many of his drawings as he can."

Thus Kolya, one unforgettable day, continually smoothing back his moist hair in his excitement, climbed with Dad to the sixth floor of a big house in Petrovsky Street. At last they reached the top and Kolya, looking back at the narrow, winding stair they had come up, felt quite dizzy. Dad rang the bell and the door was opened by Uncle Volodya. He was a lean man of average height, his movements indicating a strong, but light physique. His skin, smooth, with some traces of sunburn, was taut over prominent cheek-bones, and a smile softened the firm mouth.

"Aha! So that's the budding Serov!" said he, making way for Fyodor Nikolayevich to precede them, and glancing with interest at Kolya.

Kolya was hurt by the apparent mockery in his uncle's greeting. Now he was convinced that nothing good would come of the visit. He had stumbled after his uncle, prepared for the worst, when Uncle Volodya turned, putting a strong arm round him and almost pushing him into a room where two men were sitting. One of them, short, and bearing a close resemblance to Fyodor Nikolayevich, looked up at Kolya with kind, bright eyes. This was Uncle Lyova, a draughtsman, Uncle Volodya's brother. Beside him, smoking a long, straight-stemmed pipe, sat a stout, round-faced man.

"This is my nephew," said Uncle Volodya, introducing Kolya. "He plays around with paints, too, and no doubt

thinks he'll grow up to be a Serov. Self-confidence is not such a bad thing, but we'll soon see if there is any good reason for it." Turning to Kolya, he said: "I am introducing you to an artist friend of mine. You had better sit down and wait while we decide what we think of your work."

Uncle Volodya with brief, brisk movements made everyone sit down, took the folder of drawings from Kolya and spread it open in front of himself and the artist to whom he had introduced Kolya. Kolya sat down, far in a corner, half-dead with embarrassment and misgivings. Perhaps Uncle Volodya had asked him here to be hauled over the coals and to make him give up painting for good, since it must be clear that he had not the slightest gift in that direction. Meanwhile he could see Uncle Volodya take out his drawings one by one and, after looking them over himself, pass them to his colleague. Uncle Lyova, too, was bending over the table. Fyodor Nikolayevich stood a little way off, looking from his cousins to Kolya.

There was perfect stillness in the room. Uncle Volodya, without a word, was putting Kolya's drawings one after another in front of his colleague and each time looking questioningly at him. He would nod and Uncle Volodya would place the next drawing on the table. The only sound to be heard was the rustling of the thick paper.

Only after he had been in the room for some time did Kolya begin to take stock of his surroundings. He saw that the walls of the room were covered with Uncle Volodya's pictures in plain, narrow frames. A closer look at these pictures made Kolya's heart beat excitedly. They were, he knew, sketches of settings for various plays.

Among them Kolya saw a picture of a green table, with

officers in Guard's uniform sitting round it, playing cards, which they flung angrily on the green cloth; the dimness of the scene was relieved by the uneven flicker of candles in the heavy bronze chandeliers. In a large mirror, tipped forward from the wall in the background, was reflected a sinister repetition of the scene round the green table beneath the candles. This was obviously a sketch for one of the settings of Chaikovsky's "Queen of Spades."

On another wall was a large canvas showing the crystal surface of a lake with the overturned spires of reflected white churches and the stone walls of some fairy-tale town. Kolya did not know then that this was scenery for "The Tale of the Invisible Town of Kitezh," but he had a feeling that the white walls of the stately structures, gleaming in the watery mirror, were not merely reflected in it, but led a charmed existence of their own in the still depths of the lake.

Next to it, and on the remaining walls, hung many more sketches by Uncle Volodya, some of drawing-rooms in old mansions, others of wide city streets or secluded lanes. The scenes, without being crowded, were all very compactly designed, each governed by a subtle principle evident in the bold use made of every strip of canvas to produce a living texture and a magic three-dimensional depth.

In the corner nearest to Kolya stood a birch-tree trunk with chopped branches. Kolya had often heard at home the story of how Uncle Volodya had brought the tree from some place where he had been particularly successful with his painting and ever since had cherished it lovingly; then, when his family moved from their old house in Solyanka Street to a new one, they had forgotten in the excitement of packing to take along the tree. Uncle Volodya, as soon as he noticed its

absence, had rushed to retrieve the birch and bring it to their new home.

Kolya looked with interest at the tree, in no way remarkable, with its crudely chopped branches, and stealthily he touched its white trunk.

"Hi, there, Serov!" Uncle Volodya suddenly cried out, and this time Kolya was certain he was laughing at him. "Why are you sitting over there like that? Look, there's the War of the Roses on his cheeks," he chuckled, noticing how Kolya's cheeks turned alternately white with fear and red with embarrassment. "Come on over here and let's talk business. What colour d'you call that? I'm sure you've never seen such a dirty-looking sky in your life—it's as if someone's been parading across it in galoshes and left dirty marks everywhere. Now look at this jug—it's screaming as though it's being murdered. When you drew it, it must have been in the shade, in the background, but it's got right into the foreground in your picture. It overshadows everything and distorts the perspective, all because of its screaming colour. Now this drawing is not bad, you've got something there. And what's this? 'Requiem,' Leningrad?" If the trembling boy could have followed the expression on Uncle Volodya's face, he might have noticed the sly meaning looks he was giving the others, winking at them and making signs to them behind his back. "You've caught the atmosphere here in the picture of the old man. I can see your idea. Death and desolation all around, and he—courageous and inspired. He does not lose heart, for he's confident of victory, though he mourns the dead. You've got it here. But the background is pale, too sketchy and therefore inexpressive. There's something lacking there."

In a similar manner he went through all the drawings,

pointing out defects, errors and slipshod work. With every word he spoke, the weak points of Kolya's work stood out more glaringly and made him feel what an utter failure he was. Why hadn't he seen all this for himself before? Why, of course, the drawings were no good, and if Uncle Volodya found anything to praise, it was only to give him some little comfort, so as not to crush him completely.

"Fyodor!" Uncle Volodya turned abruptly to Fyodor Nikolayevich. "I want a word with you."

The two went to the next room.

With shaking hands Kolya began to gather up his abused drawings, and put them away in the folder. Kind-hearted Uncle Lyova looked at him with affection and something like sympathy in his eyes.

"He may grow up to be his uncle's helper," he suggested.

"Helper?" cried Uncle Volodya's artist friend. "More likely his rival."

Had they sent for him just to make fun of him? Kolya turned towards the window. Then he heard his father and uncle coming up behind him, but he felt he hadn't the courage to look round.

"Well, let's come to some decision," Kolya heard Uncle Volodya say. "I've made up my mind and I've already told Fyodor what I think: Kolya must study art. He must study it earnestly, not like a dilettante. Let him train for a while and in the autumn go in for the entrance examinations at the Art School of the Surikov Institute. I'll do what I can to help, if it is necessary. You can see the boy has the makings of an artist, but of course he lacks proper teaching. It's teaching he needs and he must get it as soon as possible."

No one seemed happier than good old Uncle Lyova. He embraced Kolya and began ruffling his hair.

"See, see," he kept repeating. "D'you think we don't understand things? Well, are you pleased?"

Kolya could hardly believe his ears. His face red, he was fiddling around with the strings of the folder. At last he ventured to raise his eyes to Uncle Volodya's face.

"Why are you staring at me like that?" said Uncle Volodya. "D'you think I scolded you for nothing? Not a bit of it. You deserved it, and I'll make it still hotter for you another time. If you want to get anywhere, you'll have to put up with a good deal, and learn to listen to what others say. Truth is a magnet that doesn't attract wood, only good metal, like iron, for example. Well, you've got to show us the stuff you're made of."

Kolya now had to concentrate all his attention on preparing for the competitive entrance examinations at the art school. The decision was taken that he should become an artist; hereafter everything depended on himself. Kolya thought it would not be a bad idea to talk matters over with Yura, but he felt some misgivings, for it was only a short time since Yura and his father had advised him not to leave the ordinary school. They said he could draw in his leisure time, combining attendance at the city art school with his regular school studies. However, after Kolya had given him a full account of his meeting with uncle Volodya, Yura approved of the course the Dmitrievs had decided upon.

"I'll be sorry to see you go, and so will the others," Yura said with a sigh, "but that's not important. There's no other course for you, and I wish you success."

Kolya was promoted to the next form with an excellent report and an honour roll certificate—"For excellent progress and exemplary conduct"—which he received on the first of June, 1946. And he thought of the powerful torch-light of science to which the certificate-bearer was drawn nearer by success in his studies. Kolya proudly pinned the certificate over his desk at home and for some time was lost in admiration of it. Then, feeling that he might be getting conceited, he put it away in the folder where he kept his best drawings.

According to Uncle Volodya, Kolya needed some serious coaching in painting, for he was backward in the use of colours. Antonina Petrovna Sergeyeva, artist and teacher, who herself taught in the Art School, was consulted, and, after seeing Kolya's work, she readily consented to coach him. Fyodor Nikolayevich took his son to the little house in a quiet side-street off Kropotkin Street where she lived. Kolya thought the house very cosy and quite like a country cottage with its wooden palings and flowers and trees in the yard; it was a house after his own heart.

And he took to Antonina Petrovna at once. She, too, very soon grew fond of the delicate-featured boy who paid such grave attention to what she said and seemed to understand every word intuitively. Her heart was completely won by his thoughtful, almost unchildish persistence, by the boldness with which he captured the forms of objects and put them down on paper, by his inexhaustible imagination. She was astonished to discover what a great deal he had read about art, how eagerly he spoke of the artists he read about, how correct and profound was his judgement of paintings by the great masters.

He was as easy to talk to as a grown-up person, and during



Silk Fabric

the lessons Antonina Petrovna would speak of her own studies at the School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture, under such masters as Kasatkin, Pasternak, Arkhipov and Serov. She had been in a class taught by Appolinary Vasnetsov. Victor Vasnetsov's daughter had been a school friend of hers, so that Antonina Petrovna had been a frequent visitor to the home of the famous artist, known for his "The Three Bogatyrs," "Alyonushka," and many other wonderful pictures, which brought to life the fantastic scenes of Russian folklore. Many artists, who had been only names to Kolya, now became quite familiar beings. It was as if Antonina Petrovna had handed on to him the unwritten precepts of the great masters. He listened eagerly to her stories of her work in Korovin's studio. After studying art she had married and gone to the Urals. The family into which she had married considered art a mere waste of time, and the young woman was compelled to paint in secret, spending many years as a school-mistress. During the Civil War her husband had joined the Red Army and had been killed not far from Tomsk, fighting against Kolchak.

Now she was teaching drawing and painting to young people. She had found her true vocation in this work which gave meaning to her life. New pupils came every year, generation after generation, like so many waves rolling over the threshold of the school. The crowded class-rooms poured forth a stream of bubbling, bustling, eager life, which beat like a tide against Antonina Petrovna's heart, giving her no chance to wither and grow old.

She had a slight limp and in the street walked with a cane. But Kolya noted with pleasure that during lessons she left her stick in a corner and held herself erect, always neatly dressed

in a dark-coloured frock with a snow-white, turn-down collar. He liked her unsmiling face with the rather large noble features (like Serov's portrait of Yermolova, he thought), her big, stern eyes, the white hair brushed upwards in an old-fashioned pompadour which he fondly examined as she bent over him to correct his drawing.

Antonina Petrovna explained the rudiments of the science of colours. She began by placing objects whose colours complemented one another; a purple-blue plum and a yellow apple, a red plate and a green vase. These she put against a neutral background, usually white, so that Kolya could unerringly discover the relation between the colours. At the beginning, accustomed to painting much more complicated things, he found these exercises boring, like practising the scales and studies on the piano. But he soon realized how useful they were. He could now see what his mistakes had been. He had been a little stubborn at the outset, even trying to prove to Antonina Petrovna that colour was not so important after all. By chance he had got hold of some drawings by Gustave Doré and engravings by Dürer, and he tried to point out—flaunting his knowledge a little—that these artists had got on quite well without colour. He went so far as to say that it was not always essential to put in shading, for if a drawing was well done, its lines, cleverly traced, could themselves give a three-dimensional impression.

But Antonina Petrovna was unmoved. She explained to him that colour was one of the properties of life, and that the artist must study the riches offered by life itself. Only after doing that, might he confine himself to some particular subject chosen for his work.

“You know something about music, I believe. You know

that there is such a thing as a violin and such a thing as an orchestra," she said. "Suppose the violin plays the melody—that's drawing. But the powerful polyphonic music of the orchestra is like painting, which uses the entire wealth of colour to make a picture which in its turn is like a symphony."

This comparison profoundly impressed Kolya, who loved and appreciated music. However, more from contrariness than anything else, he tried to retaliate at the next lesson, to which he brought one of Chistyakov's books, pointing out a passage where the master wrote: "All that is vigorous, constant, firm and noble in art is expressed in drawing... Painting brings about the decline of art, while drawing, its development."

"So why do you torment me with it so much?" said Kolya, blushing deeply.

Antonina Petrovna only laughed and ruffled the wheat-coloured tuft on the crown of her pupil's head. "Very well, very well," she said, when she had finished laughing. "You've stuffed your head with all sorts of information. But you must absorb intelligently what you read. The very same Chistyakov said: 'Everything has its time and place. Even truth is a fool, if it's out of place.' Besides, I regret to say that your drawing, great vigorous drawing, is mauled the moment you start using frail, effeminate colour, as you are pleased to call it. Chistyakov could draw with his brush, and insisted that his pupils should *draw*, not merely daub their paintings. I'll say this for you—you have an excellent feeling for colour. I can see that well enough. But you're too fond of flashy colours, and you ignore tones. You must try, as you paint, to find colours that will give a sensation of life on paper, colours that will look as you see them in life, with all their relative values and secondary colours. You can't have colour served up on a china plate all

the time. Colour must be cultivated, must grow out of the colour medium surrounding it."

And Kolya patiently got down to the business of cultivating colour.

Chapter 8

HAPPY JOURNEY!

Kolya was not seeing Kira as often as he used to, although the school was closed for holidays. Little time remained before the autumn and he had to study hard, so that he would not disgrace himself at the examination. Competition was expected to be very keen; only the very best would be admitted, and these would be chosen most rigidly. There would be applicants from all parts of the country, those from outside Moscow being given accommodation in the school's hostel.

Kira did not ask Kolya about his lessons with Antonina Petrovna, for she could see he did not care to speak about them. She never asked him, as other girls did, to draw a picture for her album, but she was glad whenever Kolya, of his own accord, showed her any of his drawings. And it pleased Kolya that she did not gasp and gush over his drawings, as some of his other friends did, but looked at them with interest and appreciation, holding her breath for a moment and afterwards releasing it without a word; then she would press his hand impulsively, so that he felt how happy his progress made her.

Kolya and Kira, when they met at each other's homes or out of doors, never talked of school work—it was a sort of unwritten law among them, as among most school children. It was not

to be expected that Kira, for example, would play for Kolya the scales and pieces set by her music teacher, or would read to him one of her school compositions. Their talk centred round the books they were reading, Young Pioneer outings, new films, war veterans coming back from the front and being met with music and honours at the Moscow railway stations, games, all sorts of domestic and public events, anything but their lessons. During the holidays talk of lessons was taboo.

Kolya always felt happy and at ease in Kira's home. He was good friends with both sisters, getting on very well with rosy-cheeked, giggling Nadya, who could think up all sorts of amusing things—a game of “twelve sticks,” or “stand still,” when one of the players would throw an object into the air and the rest would rush to reach a pre-arranged place before the object fell to the floor. Then, along with Kolya, she would erect a trolley line on the vacant lot; what she really did was to stretch a clothes line and run along it, the players touching it with the palms of their hands. As for Kira, she and Kolya were old, loyal friends, standing by one another and understanding each other perfectly. When Mother asked: “Well, how are your ‘Green Girls’ getting on?” Kolya usually answered: “Which one do you mean?” And when Mother said: “Kira, for instance!” poor Kolya would blush to the roots of his hair. Katya reported that Kira, too, blushed whenever she was asked at home how Kolya was getting on.

A short time before Kira and her mother left for the Crimea, on the fourteenth of June, a farewell party was held at their home. Victor was not invited, and as for Zhenya, the wilful Nadya had quarrelled with him. Kolya tried to get them to make it up, and almost succeeded with Nadya, but he could do nothing with Zhenya, who was quite offended. It was all about

nothing, really, having begun with a game of rounders, when Nadya accused Zhenya of cheating. From this it had gone on and on, with old sores being raked up and a real quarrel developing. Zhenya ended by declaring that he didn't care a rap for parties given by girls, anyhow. And so Kolya had to go alone.

Once there, he soon forgot the whole trouble, for it was a very lively party, with laughter, and charades, and the gramophone playing. One of the children's favourite records was repeated at least twenty times. Kolya was in one of his "frolicky" moods, as they said at home. He tried to entangle the feet of the dancers with a fishing-line, cracked jokes, and was so full of fun that there was no stopping him.

It was late and many of the guests were preparing to leave when one last game called "Famous People" was suggested. Some famous person was to be decided upon, and the one who had to guess his name could put one question, not more, to each of the players and then make his guess. Nadya was to do the questioning. Kolya, hot from his pranks, had run out into the kitchen to get a drink of cold water from the tap. When he returned the players had decided on the famous person, and all were back in their places, with Nadya called out to put her questions.

"Is it a man or a woman?"

"A man."

"Of the present time?"

"Well, more of the future, to be exact."

"Is he alive?" Nadya was somewhat perplexed.

"Oh yes."

"Very well known?"

"He's quite famous!"

"A hero?"

"To some, he is."

"In the army?"

"No!"

"Who can it be?" wondered Nadya. "Is he learned?"

"Extremely."

"Handsome?"

"Awfully!"

Nadya glanced around slyly, penetratingly.

"An artist?"

"A future one!" they all shouted.

"Kolya Dmitriev!" exclaimed Nadya triumphantly.

Laughter, squealing and hand-clapping was the answer. Kolya, his anger roused and his face red, dashed out of the room. Kira overtook him in the hall.

"Surely, you can't get offended over a thing like that! It was only a joke."

"And you knew about it and joined in with the rest?" he said reproachfully.

"Well, what of it? Can't you take a joke? Besides, you're sure to be an artist."

"I don't like people talking about it, and making fun into the bargain. I may amount to nothing—I may not even pass the examination!"

As they talked, Kolya kept walking slowly down the stairs, with Kira following him. But when they reached the landing on the second floor, Kira seized Kolya by the shoulders and with a commanding gesture, unlike her usual shy manner, turned him to face her.

"Don't you dare think like that. You'll pass, d'you hear? I'm absolutely certain you'll pass. You trust me, don't you? Say you do."

It was quite dark on the landing. The only light came from the lamp on the third floor. Kolya could hardly see Kira's face. She was standing a step higher than he, with her head obstructing the lamp, the light playing in her ruffled hair which seemed to give off a radiance.

"I trust you," said Kolya softly. "I trust you so much . . . that now I understand why, when they painted saints, they put a little circle of light like a hoop over their heads."

"Why did they, Kolya?"

"Because they trusted them so that they could almost weep. Things swam and shimmered before their eyes and they seemed to see a halo. That's how sometimes I feel, when you talk that way to me, Kira. I suddenly look and see a light moving over your head, and then you look as you do now, all in a circle of beams. I suppose you think I'm talking rot, don't you?"

"I don't know, Kolya. I think you let your imagination run away with you. Then, you know, some people call you the 'heavenly boy.'"

This maddened him.

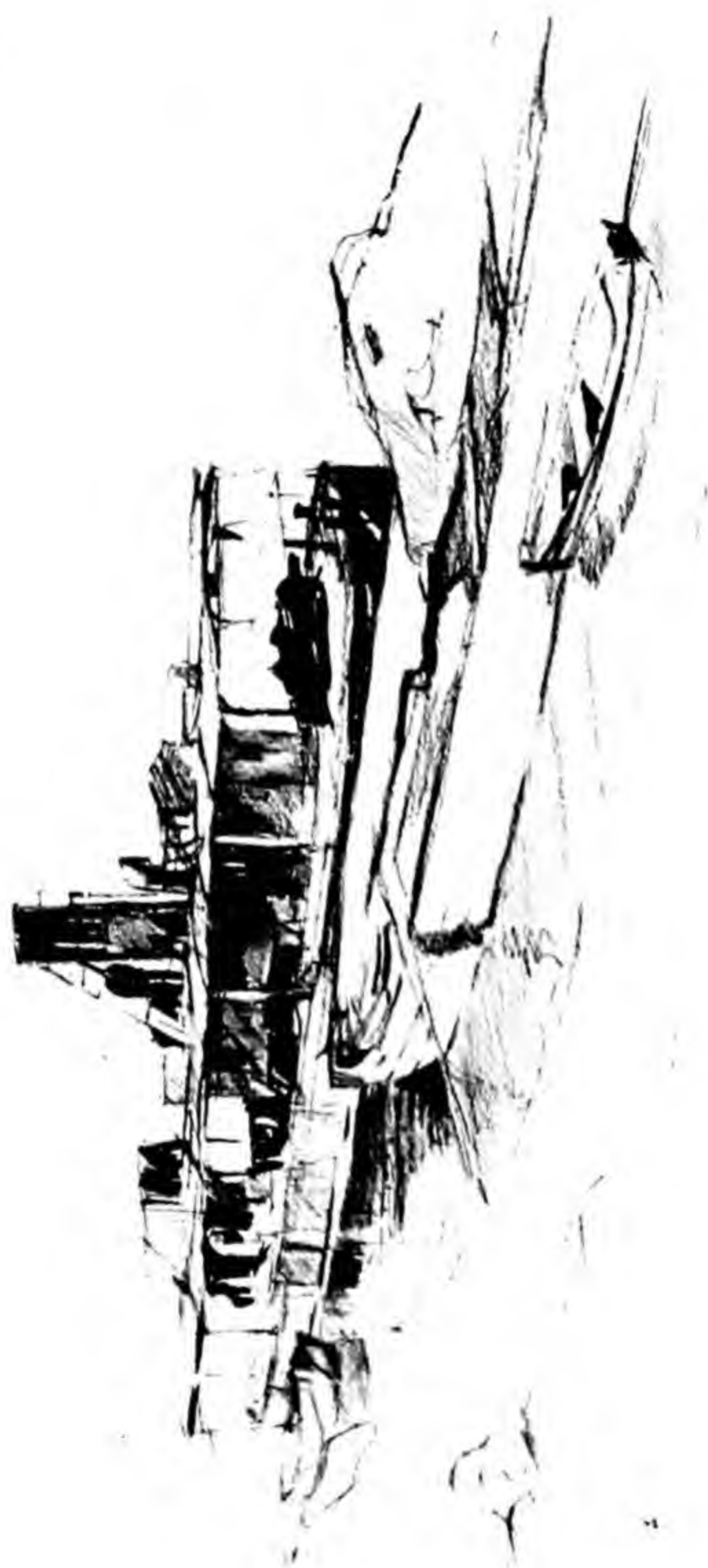
"The more fools they! Because they can't understand things, they have to make up a lot of nonsense."

"Well, really . . . And they call you 'the boy with a secret.' I heard that myself. An artist, a friend of your uncle's, said it. 'There are ordinary children,' he said, 'and there are children with a secret.'"

"A secret? What'll they say next?" drawled Kolya. "What secret have I? And it's no secret that you and I are friends. Only nobody really understands. Not Zhenya, Nadya, nor anybody."

"I do," she said.

"Then tell me something," he said, dropping his voice.



Dredge on the Oka

"What shall I tell you?"

"Tell me something I could repeat to myself and to no one else in the world."

"I don't know, really . . . All right, let me tell you, Kolya, how I feel about you. If I knew you were dying, I would take your hand like this, in mine, and I'd die with you, so you shouldn't be afraid all alone, so you could know I was with you . . ."

She squeezed his hand between her two hands as hard as she could, even shutting her eyes with the strain. She felt stronger and older than he with something of maternal power.

Deeply moved, Kolya was silent, but when she let his hand go, he raised his face trustfully to hers and said: "Listen, I'm going to paint a picture one day, when I've learned to paint properly. The scene will be an early, early dawn. There will be two people in the picture, walking, and a road winding into the distance. Far away there'll be mountains and the early sunrise. And I shall paint a little house, where a woman has only just lit a fire in the stove, and so the smoke is curling out of the chimney. She has come to the door and looks kindly after the two as if she were wishing them a happy journey. They have a long, long way to go, and the day is only just beginning. High up in the sky is an aeroplane with the first sunbeams playing on it. It is in a radiant light, while the shadows below are just beginning to disperse. And I shall call the picture 'Happy Journey.' I'll paint you as the girl when you grow up."

"And the man?"

"Who would you like him to be?"

"You know yourself. Well, I'd better go back, or they'll wonder what's happened to me. Won't you come back, too?"

"No, I'll go and think over everything you've told me."

She was about to go, but abruptly turned to him and said almost inaudibly:

"Have you a handkerchief?"

Kolya took out of his pocket a clean handkerchief which his mother had given him and which he had secretly scented with her toilet water. Kira unfolded it, told Kolya to hold it by the two upper edges over his eyes, and took hold of the lower edges herself. Then she bent down and Kolya felt a quick kiss on his cheek through the handkerchief. For a fraction of a second he lost his head, and stood frozen to the spot while his heart seemed to roll down the stairs. With bated breath he let the handkerchief fall. Kira was gone. Concealed behind the handkerchief as if it were a screen, she had vanished like a conjurer. He could hear the pat-pat of her heels on the stairs above.

Two days later, Kolya asked Kira to sit still for an hour or so while he drew a small portrait of her in profile, the size of a page in an album, as a keepsake. At that time Kolya did not venture to draw "full" portraits, as he called drawings in full face. Kira was extremely pleased with the result, but begged Kolya to put in her mole, which he was reluctant to do.

"Put it in ever so faintly for me to see, so that the picture won't be taken for Nadya's," she entreated jealously. "People are always getting us mixed up."

"All right," conceded Kolya, and held his breath as with the tip of his pencil he carefully drew the little mole in its place. "But, Kira, please, I don't want you to show the picture to anyone," he said.

"As if I would," said Kira. "You know I wouldn't."

Kira and her mother went off for a month to Yevpatoria in

the Crimea. It was agreed between the two friends that Kira would address her letters to Kolya and Katya, so that people would have no cause for teasing him.

Kolya wrote first, without waiting for a letter from Kira:

“June 22, 1946

“Dear Kira,

“I wrote this letter the day after you left, but did not post it, in case you were still travelling. Be sure to write and to let me know how you are getting on. We’re having very hot weather. I go to the Zoo almost every day to draw there. Everyone’s away and it’s awfully dull in our dusty yard. It’s not much fun staying at home. I spend the day either reading on a bench in the boulevard, or with paper and pencil at the Zoo. It’s terribly, terribly dull without you. I just don’t know what to do with myself when I’m not drawing. Every day Katya and I look to see if there’s a letter from you. I’m waiting impatiently for one. Do write to Katya and myself as often as you can, if it’s not too much trouble.

“Good-bye,

“*Kolya.*”

There was no answer for a long time. In vain did Kolya go three times a day to look in the front-door letter-box, or sent Katya, whenever they heard the slightest rustle, to see if there was a letter there.

Kolya was indeed now a constant visitor to the Zoo where he enthusiastically sketched the animals. He had long been fascinated by Serov’s drawings of animals, which he had seen in the Tretyakov Art Gallery. It was hard to tear him away from these drawings, which in a few lines, at first glance rather care-

less, would unerringly express movement and give a complete picture of the animal, its character, ways and bearing. Kolya was now trying to discover the secret of how to draw a lightning sketch conveying animal character, which Serov understood so well and could reproduce with a mastery that quite overwhelmed Kolya.

The keepers at the Zoo soon got to know the slender, fair-haired lad, who, sitting with his sketch-book somewhere at the edge of a path, would draw, hour after hour, tigers, deer, pelicans with their shovel-shaped beaks, or the hippopotamus, which always made Kolya think of an enormous 'cello-case. How could he put on paper the silky smoothness of the tiger's striped skin beneath which was brutal, resilient power and hidden fury, ready at any moment to show themselves? How to capture with a pencil the glint of the tiger's great cat's eye squinting at this strange creature sitting all day in front of his cage? Then there was the lion, gazing above the heads of the crowd, far into the distance, like a bored, shaggy-haired celebrity well accustomed to being stared at.

Kolya did not even attempt to draw the elephant: he was overawed by its size, which seemed almost unnatural in a living creature. It was hard to believe that the great hulk really moved; it was indeed more like a huge lump of rock suddenly coming to life. But he loved to draw the delicate deer with their large, almost human eyes, full of a sort of dumb fear. He was fascinated by their graceful curves, showing muscles warily tensed. He also liked to draw the playful monkeys, which lent themselves so beautifully to caricature. While he was doing this Kolya had a very amusing experience, which gave him an excuse for sending Kira another letter before receiving one from her.

“June 30, 1946

“Dear Kira,

“How are you getting on? I hope you are not having a dull time. The heat here is impossible. We haven’t had rain for almost a month now. The streets are full of dust. There’s a new film on called ‘The Ballerina.’ It’s very interesting. I go quite often to football matches, to the Park of Culture and Rest, or to the Zoo. I had a very funny experience in the Zoo the other day. I’ll tell you about it when you’re back.

“Meanwhile good-bye and best wishes for a happy holiday to all of you.

“Please answer this letter.

“*Kolya.*”

The incident at the Zoo took place one day when he went there to sketch in the company of Borya Shpigarev, one of the boys he had met at the Pioneer Club art class.

Borya Shpigarev was not what you would call a bad chap but he was scatter-brained and erratic. He would turn from one thing to another, never finishing what he had set out to do. He had gone in for drawing, showing ability but no patience, and soon he left the class and began to keep fish as a hobby, getting himself an aquarium-tank. He soon tired of the fish, and besides he had no luck with them—they kept dying. After this he started collecting gramophone records and fussed with a record player. But soon he dropped this too. Two years before he had been cast in a film which quite turned his head, so that he began imagining himself a famous actor—especially at times when he was stopped in the street by people who wanted to know whether he was the boy who played the part of the little partisan in the picture they had seen.

"I wouldn't be too conceited over it, Borya," Kolya told him more than once. "You're not a real actor—it's just that you had a lucky chance once, and it's turned your head. Why don't you study properly like the rest of us and be serious. Acting is not what you should concentrate on, you know that."

"You spend all your days drawing," Borya retorted obstinately. "Is that what you should concentrate on?"

"Well, I'm studying it," cried Kolya, "and, besides, I go to school, like anybody else, and don't turn up my nose at any of the subjects, as you've started doing."

It was true that Borya's chances of ever getting into films again were pretty slim, for he had grown into a lanky lad and was no longer the charmingly amusing little boy the film studio had picked up two years before. At school he was repeating the term, and now, having nothing better to do, he again took to drawing a little. When his parents refused to buy him paints, he managed to produce a picture called "Winter Moonlight" by using shoe-polish, putty and tooth-paste. This had so completely won over Kolya that he began taking Borya along with him to the Zoo; besides, drawing in company was really more fun.

That day the boys seated themselves near a large cage in which small monkeys, swinging their supple, long-tailed bodies, were jumping in great leaps from trapeze to trapeze across the length and breadth of the cage.

But hardly had the young artists settled down to draw when two boys came along and began teasing and bothering them.

"Say, you! Why come to the Zoo to draw monkeys, when all you have to do is sit in front of the looking-glass at home and draw."

Kolya paid no attention and went on drawing till one of the

boys came very close, and then, without turning round, he pushed him back with his elbow. But Borya was greatly affected by the intrusion. As usual he was only too glad of an excuse to drop what he was doing. If the day happened to be sunny, he would find it too hot for any occupation. If it rained his spirits would grow damp along with the weather, and studying of course would be out of the question. If a fly settled on his school-book, he wouldn't turn the page not to disturb it. Now he said at once: "I can't go on like this—they get on my nerves. I'm not going to draw any more. Come, let's go home and have nothing to do with them." And he gathered up his things.

But Kolya continued to draw persistently. When his picture was pretty well finished, he leaned back and looked at it.

"Well, I think that's about all. No, I think it needs a stroke of the brush."

With a businesslike air he opened his box of paints, poured some water from a bottle into a pot and dipped the brush in it.

"What, have you decided to colour the drawing?" asked Borya in surprise.

"I want to colour one of the monkeys," Kolya answered unperturbed.

For a long time he stirred the paints with his brush and mixed something in the saucer. Then, turning abruptly, he swiftly passed the brush across the face of the elder of the intruders.

"Now it's done," said Kolya very composedly.

The boy, with a big, brown smear across his face, involuntarily retreated and tripped, falling against the bars of the cage. At that moment one of the bigger monkeys stretched out its long, sinewy hand, clawing all five fingers into his hair. The horror-stricken lad let out a piercing shriek. Everybody gasped.

The keeper could be seen running down the path. The monkey was finally driven off with a broom and the boy, released from its grip, rubbed the top of his head, his tears mingling with the paint, which ran down his face in ugly streaks. The monkey, back on the trapeze, was blowing off its dangling fingers the hairs pulled out of the boy's head. Kolya sat down and laughed so much that he lost his balance and rolled down the gravel path.

It was this that Kolya had in mind when he wrote to Kira, from whom at last a letter arrived—after he had been worrying for a long time, and Zhenya and Victor had almost grown tired of teasing him and hinting that one shouldn't pin too much faith on "that sort of thing."

Kolya read Kira's letter again and again. True, most of it was taken up with descriptions of the beauty of the sea and the landscape, but Kolya knew that this could not be helped. And when he read that the sea was wonderful and that only he, Kolya, could really appreciate its beauty, he sighed happily and, suddenly putting his arms round Katya's waist, began pulling her about and rummaging her hair.

"Katya, Katya, my little Figgimigigit! You're a darling, though you don't understand a thing!"

Further down the letter Kira wanted to know if Kolya hadn't forgotten the evening which she thought of every time she saw the sun sink behind the horizon.

Kolya at once began to write a reply.

"July 4, 1946

"Dear Kira,

"We've received your letter at last, Katya and I, and we read it with the greatest pleasure. It's a real joy to hear from you.



Figure Sketches

You have no idea how we miss you. We simply don't know what to do with ourselves. Katya plays all day long with Nadya. I sit reading or thinking of you, particularly the latter, and it's obvious why. I shall remember that evening of the 14th of June, 1946, as long as I live. I hope you won't forget it either.

"Good-bye till we meet in Moscow.

"Kolya."

Chapter 9

EXAMINATIONS

Kira and her mother were expected back in August. Kolya waited impatiently for the day of their return. But there loomed before him another day, the thought of which made his heart sink: the day of the competitive entrance examinations for the art school.

The application form and all the necessary papers had been handed in. Dad went with Kolya to the school to speak to the principal and make sure of all particulars about the examinations. In the doorway they were met by the tall doorman, bewhiskered and hook-nosed, who was nicknamed the "Gander," the boys told Kolya. He had the erect carriage of an old-time sergeant-major and he waved his hand imperiously to show them the way to the principal's office. He gave Kolya and his father quite a searching look. Apparently he did not think much of Kolya, for he shook his head dubiously before going back to his post at the door.

Fyodor Nikolayevich was asked to wait for a while, as the principal was engaged. Father and son sat down on a long bench which seemed very cool to Kolya on that hot July day.

Indeed, it was so chilly in the hall that Kolya felt his feet going numb and even began to wriggle his toes in his sandals. Apprehensively he stared at the office door, white, massive, forbidding, with the word "Principal" inscribed in gilt letters over a panel of black-painted glass. Perhaps Kolya's fate would be decided behind that door. The door was blown slightly open by the breeze, so that a slanting sunbeam—a phantom triangle with whirling particles of dust—fell through the slit on to the parquet floor. A big bronze-coloured fly strayed into the vibrating sunbeam, glimmered for a moment, then caught the light again and undauntedly flew into the principal's office. Kolya, fascinated, waited to see what would happen to the fly. But soon it flew out again quite unconcernedly. Kolya really envied it. "It doesn't turn a hair and I sit here worrying."

In a few minutes Fyodor Nikolayevich was asked to step into the principal's office. Kolya remained outside. Dad soon came out and told him that the papers had been accepted and everything was in order, except for the principal's warning that the number of applicants was greater this autumn than it had ever been before and that competition would be very keen.

As they were going out, the doorman came up to them. He wore a white tunic with metal buttons, green with age, and a gold-braided cap. "Gander! Gander!" teased some little boys from across the street, but he paid not the slightest attention. Twirling the ends of his walrus moustache, he nodded in Kolya's direction and asked: "Is he joining?"

"We hope he will," said Fyodor Nikolayevich.

Again the doorman regarded Kolya without the slightest sign of approval, and coughed sternly. It was a habit of his to engage visitors in conversation. And he had made such a

nuisance of himself by asking too many questions and being too curious that it had been found necessary to transfer him from one job to another. If, for example, some visitor to Moscow, taken in by the erect, imposing figure of the doorman, happened to ask him where a newspaper advertisement for lost papers could be handed in, he would at once enter into a long, dreary conversation.

"Lost your papers, Lord bless my soul! Stolen, I'll bet. Well, well, what a mishap. And was there any money? The money gone, too—a very bad thing. And how much money was there? Thirty-two rubles, you say. Well, that's a tidy sum. In the street? No use looking for it there, for it won't be lying around waiting for you. Was there anything else? A certificate? What was that for? From the Registry Office. Well, that's not so bad. You can get what they call a duplicate. But how did the things get stolen from you? Don't you know the safety rules for keeping things? Well, now you'd better apply for new papers. That's the usual thing. But first you must advertise in the newspapers. You won't get anywhere before that's done."

And when, utterly exhausted by the doorman's long harangue and prying questions, the visitor would produce a notice, already written, the doorman would say:

"Why show it to me? Do you take us for a newspaper office? We don't print things—we're a school, an educational institution. What you need is a newspaper office. I'll tell you what to do: take trolley-bus 2 and . . ."

By this time the visitor was so glad to make his escape that he would take to his heels without a word of protest.

Now the doorman was dubiously regarding father and son.

"So you mean to compete?" he asked, twitching his mous-

tache ominously. He liked putting the fear of death into the parents of applicants, so that they would make no mistake as to what a grand place they were bringing their children to.

"Got anyone behind you?" he asked confidentially, bending to Fyodor Nikolayevich.

Kolya looked round, startled.

"Got anyone to speak for you, I mean?" the Gander explained. "There's plenty of people wanting to get in, and little enough room, I tell you."

Realizing now what he meant, Kolya looked contemptuously at the doorman with the big moustache and pulled his father towards the door.

At home, however, it was decided that no outside support was to be scorned, especially when it was legitimate and just. So Dad got together Kolya's recent drawings and took them to Uncle Volodya.

"Well, how's the budding Serov getting on?" asked Vladimir Vladimirovich as soon as he caught sight of his cousin.

"I wish you'd at least not call him that to his face. He's shy and not conceited, you'll spoil him."

"Can't you see it is impossible to spoil him?" said Uncle Volodya, and eagerly began to examine Kolya's work. "Just look what progress he's made! It's really striking! Lyova, come here, all of you come here and tell me if he hasn't the makings of a real Serov."

And he strode about the room, praising Kolya's drawings, throwing them on the table and shouting:

"You don't understand a thing! Here's a great artist in the bud and you say: 'Don't spoil him!' As if he could ever be spoiled! And what does he need a recommendation from me for? Of course I'll give him one—they say too much cream

won't spoil the porridge. I'll give him one with pleasure, straight from my heart! And with a clear conscience, not because he's a relative."

He sat down at the table, drew out a sheet of paper bearing the emblem of the Moscow Art Theatre, the soaring white sea-gull, and rapidly tapped out a letter on his typewriter.

Fyodor Nikolayevich went home very pleased with the letter he had got. Kolya flushed violently when he saw the words: "And in my opinion he shows great artistic gifts." He read the letter through from beginning to end, taking it all in, from the white sea-gull to the artist's signature, and then looked from his father to his mother.

"Thank you, Dad," he said very softly as if afraid of hurting his parents by what he was going to say, but continuing with unexpected firmness: "I had no idea Uncle Volodya had such a high opinion of me—honestly I didn't suspect it. It's really grand. But let's not make use of the letter. Just a minute! Let me explain. If I'm really as good as Uncle Volodya says, I'll pass, letter or no letter. But if Uncle is wrong, then isn't it better to know the truth as soon as possible, and not when it's too late? I won't take it," he finished, shaking his head stubbornly and folding the letter neatly, before putting it back in its envelope.

The letter remained at home, hidden away in the folder where among his best drawings Kolya kept the honour roll certificate he had got at school.

Kolya was preparing for a severe ordeal—perhaps the most severe and decisive he had ever faced—and the only thing to be done was to study harder than ever. But just then Kira and

her mother returned. Kira had got so sunburnt in the Crimea that she looked like a negative of her own photograph. Her sun-bleached hair and eyebrows were a lighter shade than her face. But her eyes—no words could describe them!

Now, instead of going along in his spare time with Zhenya or Victor to the Park of Culture and Rest, to a football match or to the pictures, Kolya would run across the street to see Kira. Sometimes in the evening Kira and Nadya would come along to Kolya's yard, and they would all meet under the old oak, picking up acorns and throwing them at one another, happy that there was such a delightful spot in the world as this corner by the old oak, which must have witnessed so much in its time. The boys called it Kolya's oak, remembering the incident of the wood-cutters.

Everything went well until an evil spirit intervened, a spirit wearing a fashionable suit with full plus-fours and answering to the name of Victor Lanevsky.

"You've become quite an expert at drawing portraits," he said one day, looking knowingly at Kolya. "If I were you, I'd send that one you did to the All-Union Art Exhibition. It's a ripping picture—better than the original, I should say. We had a good look at it."

"Who showed it to you? When did you see it?" Kolya could scarcely move his lips, which twitched with pain.

"You had better ask Zhenya."

Zhenya, who was standing nearby, shook his head significantly and pityingly.

"Did you see it, too?" asked Kolya, still hoping that it was all a mistake.

"Why not? Why shouldn't I be shown the picture when everybody else was."

It doesn't take much to make you quarrel when you are thirteen and when the utter faith you have in someone is betrayed, no matter how slightly. Then you will accept no excuses, letting the sense of injury swell till it blots out everything else, unrelenting, unforgiving.

And only a day or two before Mother had got for Kolya a large volume on Surikov, one of his favourite painters. It contained loose, coloured prints of the painter's most famous pictures: "The Execution of the Streltsi," "Boyarinya Morozova," "Menshikov in Beryozov," "Taking the Snow Fortress," and one of Stenka Razin, showing the famous Cossack chieftain sitting in bitter solitude in his boat, apart from his oarsmen. Evidently this was Razin after he had cast the beautiful Persian princess into the rising waves of the Volga, a hard but just deed which is described in a famous Russian song.

Zhenya made things worse by saying: "You should be studying hard now and not hanging around girls. Besides, you've begun to forget your old chums. You've got yourself in a mess, old chap. You drew her picture, putting your heart into it, and she goes about showing off. 'Look what a nice picture he made of me!'"

That evening they gathered as usual near Kira's home, not far from the Institute for the Deaf. As the "green girls," suspecting nothing, came tripping along, Kolya said harshly in front of everybody: "Come on, Kira, show us the picture I made of you."

Kira looked at him in astonishment. She sensed that something was wrong but had no idea what it could be.

"But, Kolya, you told me yourself I mustn't... Why you..."

There was such grief and alarm in her wide-open eyes that

Kolya felt a touch of remorse. But he was bent on being firm to the end.

"Never mind what I told you. Never mind what's been promised me. Everybody's seen it anyhow."

"What d'you mean, Kolya? Who's seen it?"

"I think we'd better keep to the truth, don't you?" warned Kolya. "Whoever has seen it, has seen it, and it's too late to be surprised about it."

"All right, have it your own way," said Kira, drawing herself up.

She went off and nobody said a word while she was gone. Nadya glanced nervously at the boys. Kira was soon back with the unfortunate picture.

"Is that the one?" Kolya asked the boys, trying to take it from Kira. But she would not let it go. "Was it this one, I'm asking you?" he repeated.

"The same one, with signature and seal," said Victor shrilly.

"The very one," confirmed Zhenya.

Nadya, who had all this time been silent, suddenly stepped resolutely between Kolya and her sister.

"Kira had nothing to do with it," she said defiantly. "Why can't you leave her alone? It's my picture, not hers, and when Kira was away I put it on the table."

"Yours?" drawled Victor. "Ho! And we thought . . ."

"I say!" Zhenya cried admiringly, snatching off his cap and hitting his knee with it. "So Nadya's been putting it over on us!"

Nadya, her nostrils quivering, looked at the boys.

"What she says is true," Zhenya continued, moving to one side and looking first at the picture and then at Nadya. "Why, if you look at Nadya from this side, you can't tell her from Kira."



115. The Warrior's Outpost

The Warrior's Outpost

Amazed, Kira turned to her sister. Only now did she realize that while she was away Nadya had put the picture on the table for the boys to see. Kira had left the picture in her sister's keeping, making it quite clear that she must not show it to anyone. Yet Kira felt that she, too, was partly at fault. She had broken her promise to Kolya by entrusting the picture to her sister's care; and she could not help showing it to Nadya the very first day it was given her. Kira bowed her head. Kolya took the picture out of her hands after she had made but a feeble attempt to hold it back.

With an india-rubber produced from his pocket Kolya angrily rubbed out the little mole.

"What have you done?" Nadya asked nervously.

"Nothing. There was a spot of dirt and I rubbed it off. Here, take it—it's your picture. I'm returning it to its rightful owner."

Kira turned away abruptly. She put her hands up to her face and ran home.

"I don't want it!" cried Nadya, also on the verge of tears. "It doesn't look like me at all, not at all!"

"Doesn't it? Well, then it's a bad picture and there was no need to show it around," retorted Kolya, seizing the picture from her. He tore it viciously into tiny bits and, throwing them on the ground, walked off.

"You were grand last night," said Zhenya rather shamefacedly to Kolya the next day. "I didn't think that you had it in you."

Kolya swaggered a little—yes, he had put his foot down,

hadn't he? But beneath the bravado there was grief and darkness in his heart.

"Well, you're too young to understand such things," he told Katya. "But I read in a book that only he who had been through war, hunger and love will ever be a man."

He felt that he had torn something out of his heart; like tearing a page out of a book, and breaking off on an important sentence in the middle of a word, so that the following page makes no sense. But on the page now open before him the word "EXAMINATIONS" was written in big letters, and it was always in front of his eyes. Whatever happened, he must pass his examinations with honours.

A day before the examinations Kolya, as he usually did whenever any serious matter was at hand, set off to see Professor Gaiburov, who had just returned from an expedition. The professor, bronzed, looking strong and in the best of spirits, greeted him very heartily and, jerking his brown, weather-beaten cheek-bones, said in a deep voice:

"Welcome, Kolya! It's ages since I've seen you. My, but you've grown, and they tell me you're growing in your work, too. Tomorrow is the great day, eh? Got cold feet? No business to have. Go to it and you'll carry the day. And now let's hear the ins and outs of it so that we can begin figuring things out."

Kolya, now and then, felt a deep need to talk with the professor. Of course he could discuss anything at all with Dad, but somehow talks with Dad had the familiar flavour of home—a mere shifting of ideas along the same beaten track. With the professor it always happened so that the conversation would flow of itself into the desired channels and at the same time would take the most unexpected turns. Talks with Dad—which Kolya still liked very much—were like strolling along

the old, well-known road; talks with the professor were apt to become crusades for the exploration of truth.

The professor plied him with questions. When he learned that Kolya had refused to take his uncle's letter to school he burst out vehemently:

"Good man! That was the right thing to do, just like a Young Pioneer. Never take the line of least resistance. You know what Mayakovsky said: 'Wherever, whenever did the great choose the beaten, easy path?' As for that popular saying about porridge not being spoilt with too much cream, I, for one, would keep off such porridge, and I advise you to do the same. Don't put too much faith in popular sayings. Often people have thought them up to comfort themselves and in defence of their shortcomings, rather than to express truth. There are all manner of sayings—take this one, for example—'A bad name is not smoke, it won't eat your eyes out.' That's a disgraceful saying, for it teaches one to disregard one's own conscience. And there's another saying just as bad: 'Truth is good but happiness is better.' Does this apply to our present order of things when happiness goes hand in hand with truth, lives side by side with it, for in our country to be good is to be happy? By our way of living we don't get pie in the sky—we get our pie on earth for the good things we do."

"And what about rogues?" it suddenly occurred to Kolya to ask.

"Hm, rogues!" the professor said with a grin. "There's plenty of scum on the earth, but with us these undesirables can't take things easy. They play around up to a point but only up to a point, and that's the end. Of course we've got to keep our eyes open... But what was I saying?... For example, did you hear people tell you: 'You'll grow old before

your time if you know much'? Now that's a vicious saying, which actually tries to frighten people away from knowledge, so that they can be kept in ignorance. You bear in mind the opposite: 'You'll never grow old if you know much.' Then you'll always be moved by the desire to dig more deeply into knowledge. Youth of the brain, the inquiring mind, will be yours. "Better" is the enemy of "good" is another bit of rot that has been hammered into our heads by poor-spirited people. 'Better' is not the enemy but the friend of 'good.' And you, my boy, strive for 'better'—don't rest content with mere 'good.' I repeat that I approve of your having refused to make use of your uncle's letter. Talent shines and speaks for itself. It needs no affidavit, no signature, no seal. Mediocrity, puerility, misfortune, are always rustling papers, fumbling for them, sticking them under your nose, waving them before your eyes, fluttering them like crumpled wings. As for you, the time has come for you to put your powers to the test."

After his talk with the professor, Kolya went home, confident of his powers and with a sense of pride in having taken the right course. Victor had no inkling of this when, on coming across Kolya in the yard, he said:

"Going to try your luck tomorrow? I'll bet some uncle or aunt of yours will put in a word for you. You've got loads of artists among your relatives, haven't you? They'll see you through."

It would have been useless to explain, or to assure Victor that no wires were being pulled, for he would neither have understood nor believed. Funny, there he was, living in the same yard with Kolya and the rest, but to hear him talk you'd think he lived somewhere at the other end of the world. If only he could have spoken to Kira, thought Kolya, she would have

understood. But that was something he shouldn't have on his mind at all. The thing to do was to pull himself together and be ready for the next day's examinations.

Kolya set off to take his examinations on a clear August morning. He put his head under the tap to smooth the unruly tuft, put on his favourite jacket, turned the white collar of his shirt over it, and went out of the house with Mother and Dad. Katya ran after him and, not looking at him, thrust into his hand a little cake of chocolate, a bright-coloured feather tied to it with a ribbon.

"Take this. It'll bring you luck!"

He tried to laugh but could not. He looked down at Katya and nodded as if to say: "Don't you worry about me!" Then, intent upon the purpose ahead of him, he went on, looking on the surface even more composed than usual.

At the school entrance he said good morning to the Gander, who was all rigged up in honour of the occasion. He nodded encouragingly to Kolya.

The children waiting to be examined were soon directed to the various class-rooms.

The examination on the principal subject had begun.

In the hall, where all mothers and fathers waited eagerly and nervously to hear the results of the examination, the hands of the clock seemed to move very slowly. Fyodor Nikolayevich, unable to restrain himself, had gone over several times already to the doorway which had swallowed up Kolya.

The doorman went into the examination room for a minute on some errand or other and when he came out he was surrounded and showered with questions: "How are things

going in there?" His replies were vague and pompous; he put on important airs and tried to inspire awe. Everything, he said, was strictly according to rules and all entrants were judged on their merits only. Recognizing Fyodor Nikolayevich, he relaxed slightly and said to him in passing: "Dmitriev's your son? A blond little chap? He stands a fair chance . . ."

Soon, one after the other, the aspirants who had submitted their drawings began coming out, and each was instantly surrounded and questioned. But Kolya was not among them. Natalia Nikolayevna, in her impatience, went over to the door of the examination room, too. Almost all those who had been in the same class-room as Kolya were now back in the hall, but there still was no sign of him. While waiting, Natalia Nikolayevna heard a little girl, who was confiding her hopes and fears to her mother, say loudly: "Oh, Mummy, if you could only see the drawing one of the boys has done. It's simply wonderful. A fair-haired boy he is . . ."

At last Kolya came out. His forehead was moist and his eyes looked weary, but they lit up with a blue joyous light when he caught sight of his parents.

"Well?" they asked softly together.

"I lost my rubber," said Kolya. "There was someone with a funny cropped head sitting in front of me. I touched him on the shoulder and said: 'Lend me your india-rubber, old chap!' And it turned out to be a girl with bobbed hair. Wasn't that funny?"

"Wait a minute!" said his mother, checking him. "How was your drawing?"

"My drawing?" repeated Kolya absently. "Ah, the drawing they set us to do . . . I'll show you!"

He took his note-book out of his pocket, tore out a page, put

it on the window-sill, and drew with confident strokes a stuffed raven, an apple and a standing plate. It was a sketch of the still-life group set for the examination.

A week later Kolya Dmitriev's name appeared on the list of those admitted to the art school.

PART THREE

*In your work follow the road which
leads from imagination and contempla-
tion to depiction.*


P. P. PASHKOV,
ARTIST AND TEACHER





Chapter 1

THE SCHOOL OPPOSITE THE TRETYAKOV ART GALLERY

e had an inborn grace with easy movements and simple, unaffected manners. And he was deeply and sympathetically interested in the people around him. There was something pleasing about his glance and even the air seemed purer in the presence of this slender, fair-haired youth. No matter what he did—took his football to the vacant lot to play with the boys, or set off for the park to draw, carrying a box of paints, or bought some flowers, picking them out carefully, it was a pleasure to watch him. People would look after him and remark: "What a trim lad—he looks so gentle and self-reliant!"

Kolya would come home and thrust the little bunch of sweet peas or other flowers he bought into his mother's hand with a rough embarrassment which did not conflict with the ease and beauty of his movements. His gestures had a sweeping rhythm and sometimes what seemed a casual air, but they were nearly always clear-cut and purposeful. If he were laying down a book he somehow swung it on to the table in just the right position. He always put things in their places at once, avoiding any tidying up afterwards. He detested any kind of fuss and was very fond of order, his eye never missing the

least improvement in the household. "Oh, you've got the curtains up. I'm glad," he would say delightedly as he came in. Or: "Mother, your hair's done different—it does look nice."

His taste in clothes was simple, with a preference for sports outfits; as a rule he wore short breeches with patch pockets, a checkered sports shirt with an open collar and sleeves rolled above the elbows.

Such was Kolya Dmitriev at the time he was admitted to the Moscow Art School.

The days before the beginning of school were perhaps as happy as any he could have dreamed of. He had passed the examinations with flying colours and on his merits alone. A new period would soon set in when he would devote all his time to hard work in his dearly loved field. But for the moment he had a short breathing-space to enjoy being idle.

One thing clouded Kolya's mood: he could not share his happy hours with Kira, who would have rejoiced in them no less than himself. How foolish their quarrel had been! Need he really have made such a fuss and was she, after all, so much to blame? The whole thing was Victor's fault; he had been so eager to tell tales and set them all at loggerheads. Zhenya was a fine one, too, and the one chiefly to blame, of course, was Victor.

After the quarrel with Kira, Kolya's dislike of Victor increased greatly. All he wanted now was to have it out with him, and a chance was not long in coming. Like so many of the other events in the lives of the youngsters of Number 10, Plotnikov Street, it came about beneath the old oak-tree, which had seen countless quarrels, conflicts, disputes and reconciliations.

It all began when Victor produced a packet of American cigarettes and handed them round. Zhenya, who had been very strictly brought up, glanced uncertainly at Kolya and refused.

"What about you?" said Victor to Kolya, who was sitting on the bench beneath the oak.

Kolya shook his head.

"Come on, try it, just one puff, and see what it's like," persisted Victor. "They're 'Camel'—a fine brand, I tell you. A pilot friend of Dad's brought them over. What are you scared of? You can keep mum about it at home. All you've got to do is rinse your mouth with cold tea and brush your teeth, and nobody'll be any the wiser."

"Leave me alone, Victor!" Kolya pushed away the hand holding out the packet of cigarettes.

"It turns my stomach to look at you!" muttered Victor through his teeth. "You think you're going to be an artist. I tell you you're too soft and nothing ever comes of fellows that are soft. It's: 'you mustn't do this and you mustn't do that.' Isn't it about time they stopped molly-coddling you? Why do you grudge yourself every little pleasure?"

"I don't grudge myself anything—on the contrary, I try to get the most out of everything," Kolya objected, feeling anger surge in him.

Victor now irritated him so much that he could scarcely bear to look at the little dandy with his smart coat and his writhing lips putting out a flow of glib offensive words which were not even his own but phrases he had picked up somewhere.

"If that's what you call getting the most out of things—" Victor said with undisguised mockery.

"You won't understand—but I can't act differently."

"Yes, you can!"

"No, I can't. I mean—I have no right to. Anyhow I've made up my mind always to do what I think is right—to follow my own conscience in everything."

"Why so particular? You frighten me!" sneered Victor.

"Because, because . . . because I believe—I'm perfectly certain, in fact—that a person who behaves badly cannot become a real artist in our day, an artist who'd have the respect of the people."

"Aha, wonderful! You mean to say that only a goody-goody boy has the chance of becoming an artist. And what if your being good is wasted and you come to nothing?"

Victor looked triumphantly at Kolya and, thrusting his hands into the pockets of his smartly-tailored coat, began to sway backwards and forwards on his feet.

"How d'you mean 'come to nothing'? At least I'll grow up to be somebody who's useful in the world."

"Oh, stop that rot!" Victor said contemptuously. "It makes me sick to listen to you! I repeat—you're just a sissy."

"Mind what you say, Victor!" Kolya's blood was up.

"Well, if the word 'sissy' offends your aesthetic sense, then let's say you're a 'lady's man.' I know why you're so huffy, but you ought to be grateful to me for showing up those two, or else I bet you'd still be hanging around them."

Kolya rose from the bench and went up close to Victor.

"You'd better not talk that way," he said slowly and softly, but very distinctly stressing every word he uttered. "I don't like people talking to me that way! D'you get it? I won't stand that sort of muck from you."

"Is that so?" Victor said. "Touched a tender spot, have I?"

"I'll punch you—you'll drive me to it!" Kolya spoke still

more softly and his eyes darkened, growing very blue. Victor knew that one more reckless word would make Kolya carry out his threat, and so he stepped back behind the trunk of the oak-tree and shouted: "Can't you take a joke?"

"From you I'll take neither jokes nor serious talk," said Kolya. "Get out of here!"

"You're a bit too bossy these days. The yard's not your private property!"

"Never mind whether it's private or public—I warn you not to show your nose any farther than this line!" Kolya declared gravely, making a mark with the tip of his boot on the ground by the oak. "I dare you to cross it."

Victor did not take up the dare but found it much wiser to retreat, muttering threats and saying he would find a way to put Kolya in his place.

Feeling lighter at heart Kolya went home, but there he found himself in quite a predicament. Katya, drawing him aside, whispered that she had seen Kira and Nadya. The two sisters were very sorry for all that had happened and were willing, if Kolya was, to make it up. Would he send them a note, which Katya could deliver? When he heard this he was ready to jump for joy, but he restrained himself in case his sister would notice. After all they wanted him to take the first step towards reconciliation.

"You're too young to understand this," he told Katya. "But you can take them a note. I'll write it at once."

And he wrote:

"Kira and Nadya,

"You want us to be friends again, but after the quarrel we had do you think we can take up our friendship where we left

off? No, I don't think it'll ever be the same. If you knew what it was that made me quarrel with you, you would not wish to be friends again. I'll tell you: I was teased and made game of to such an extent that I was actually forced to break off our friendship. If I were you I would not try to make it up with one who had so insulted and humiliated you.

“K.”

There was no answer, though, to tell the truth, Kolya had been expecting one. After the harsh words they had exchanged at the oak, Victor kept away from the yard.

“By the way, I knocked Victor down yesterday,” Zhenya let drop casually, a day or two later, when he met Kolya in the yard. “He began saying all sorts of things about you and I gave him what he deserved.”

“Try not to have anything to do with him, Zhenya. He's a rotter—I told you he was.”

“I'm dropping him for good!” said Zhenya with an air of finality.

Kolya realized that he had thoroughly got the better of Victor. But he now had other things on his mind. He was entirely absorbed in the new life which had opened up before him and which was for ever springing new surprises on him.

The term at the art school had begun.

It began in the school's new premises which were delightful-looking. It would have been hard to imagine more congenial surroundings. The large new building that housed the school was opposite the Tretyakov Gallery in Lavrushinsky Street, so that after lessons one could run across the narrow street, dash through the now familiar doors and find oneself in a world filled with the paintings of great masters. It was so close



II *Shampoo*

At Barber's

to the school that the pictures seemed to be saying: "Hi, there, youngsters! Which of you have we got to make room for now?"

The new school was a joy. Everything in it seemed just right and held out tantalizing prospects—even the odour of turpentine and oil-paints with which the senior class-rooms were saturated within a few days after opening. To the juniors the seniors were superior beings, who had already been initiated into the highest wisdom of the arts. Their conversation was interspersed with such perplexing words as "plain-air," "Barbizon School," "Biedermeier," accompanied by fine artistic gestures—they had to be artistic. Kolya was quite charmed, too, with the class-room, where his training began. It was furnished with convenient easels and tripods, with jugs draped in bright-coloured stuffs, and plaster models of fruit, which Kolya, like all novices, tried with his teeth. In the corner was a sink from which they took water for mixing their paints. The unobscured sky above the Moskva River could be seen through the large, upper-storey windows of the class-room.

Kolya liked his class-mates, too. They all had the same standing as beginners, nobody put on airs or boasted excessively. He soon made friends with a tall well-built lad named Yegor Chursin.

"What do you like drawing best of all?" Yegor asked Kolya as they sat beside each other in the class-room where they were taught general subjects.

"Oh, all sorts of things," said Kolya shyly and blushed. "I like historical subjects when we have composition lessons. And I like drawing people and, of course, I like landscape. I'm very fond of nature."

"I like landscape best of all, too," said Yegor.

"I like drawing animals," said a sturdy lad with short-cropped hair, sitting behind them. "I can do animals better than anything else. So I hope to become an animal painter."

Just then the teacher came in and the lesson in Russian grammar began.

During the first few days at school Kolya blushed so deeply whenever he was spoken to that the teachers kept asking if he had taken ill and was running a temperature.

Kolya's temperature was quite normal. Any feverishness on his part was due to his impatience to get as soon as possible to the principal thing, to the mysteries and secrets which he hoped would instantly be revealed to him in this school for artists. He was somewhat disappointed, for the painting teacher, who was none other than Antonina Petrovna, set much the same tasks as those he had worked on in the summer, and it was uninspiring to think that he was merely continuing something already familiar to him. Once more he had to listen to the maxims of Chistyakov, although now they were addressed not to him in particular, but to the whole class: "Look at two or three colours at the same time. Don't look at a single point . . ."

Antonina Petrovna said, just as she had said in her own home: "Look and think more . . . Look at the colour of your sky! Is it like that at the horizon? Haven't you ever had a proper look at the sky, or do you see nothing but the ground at your feet? It's only right overhead that it's deep blue like that. At the horizon it's lighter—there's white in it. Go and look out of the window."

But she was not altogether the same as she had been in the summer. Here she was far more strict, not nearly so friendly,

and a little aloof, Kolya thought. Her limp was not noticeable in class, and she managed without her stick, leaving it somewhere in a corner. Kolya, who had at first been jealous, began to respect her more than ever. She was the whole class's teacher here, not only his.

"Just look at the way he stands! Where has his leg got to?" She was addressing the boy who called himself an animal painter.

A composition lesson was in progress; the students were not drawing from life, but had been given the theme of Taras Bulba's* meeting with his sons.

"Is that how you stand when you fight?" continued Antonina Petrovna.

"I never fight," replied the would-be animal painter.

"Well, on occasion it's not a bad thing to fight."

These words of his composed, staid teacher won Kolya's admiration. She understood, it seemed, that one had to fight sometimes. At the same time he thought she was too strict and meddled in affairs that were not her province.

"Don't you think the jug ought to be more browner?" he once said to her when painting a still life. "It's in the shadow of the plate, isn't it?"

"Kolya! Dmitriev!" exclaimed Antonina Petrovna. "Watch your grammar—whoever speaks that way?"

"This isn't a grammar lesson, is it?" Kolya answered rudely, winning the silent approval of the class.

"That's no reason why you shouldn't speak correctly," said Antonina Petrovna sternly.

Kolya sighed.

* The principal character of Gogol's novel of the same name. — *Tr.*

"It's just like any other school," he said to himself. "There's no freedom."

A brisk little man with fierce eyebrows would often march into the class-room. He talked and moved about in a brusque, jerky manner, his eyes darting right and left as he passed from one pupil to another, frowned, grunted and then muttered into Antonina Petrovna's ear before leaving:

"Gifted . . . little devils that they are! But you're spoiling them—you humour them too much when they should be treated rough. D'you think I don't see? That fair-haired lad over there—what's his name?—Dmitriev. He's got interesting ideas. And a good eye. But don't let him have his own way too much!"

This man—Sergei Pavlovich Mikhailov—was an artist and a teacher, a man of great erudition, utterly devoted to his profession, but doing his best to conceal the fact that there was nothing he liked so much as promising pupils. Kolya was at first afraid of him, but soon got used to his ways, trembling only a little when he knew the artist was standing behind him, coughing fiercely but growling approvingly as he eyed the drawing pinned to Kolya's board.

Then Kolya suffered an unexpected set-back. The task given at one of the composition lessons was to draw illustrations to three of Krylov's fables: "The Wolf in the Kennels," "The Wolf and the Crane" and "The Hard-Working Bear." Kolya was pleased with the task as he had some experience in drawing animals, although, of course, he did not consider himself an "animal painter." He had not spent all that time in the Zoo for nothing, and he had very little trouble with the task, drawing with a facile hand and finishing his work before the rest. He thought his drawing for "The Wolf and the Crane" particularly good.

But at the end of the week, when marks were given, Kolya got only "Fair" for composition. Antonina Petrovna told him regretfully that the school council had pronounced his work to be not his own but practically all copied from Serov.

"I didn't copy it, Antonina Petrovna," declared Kolya, his lips trembling. "It's not true. I don't mind so much for myself, but it's a shame people knowing Serov so badly. He hasn't any drawings like this one!"

At home he told Dad what had happened and made him go with him to the Tretyakov Gallery and afterwards to get books containing reproductions from Serov's well-known drawings. They found no drawings belonging to Serov that were like Kolya's. It was clear that Kolya had done the composition quite independently, thinking it out himself, but as he greatly admired Serov he had unwittingly imitated him, adopting many of the lines and poses and the very foreshortening used by his favourite artist. His pencil was thus guided by his impressionable memory; he could not shake off the powerful spell of the great artist. Kolya explained all this as best he could to Antonina Petrovna, who was no less upset than her pupil.

"Well, that's how it is," she said. "Sergei Pavlovich is right—I spoil you, and at times it's better to be strict."

But nothing could be done. The mark could not be changed and Kolya long harboured a grievance both on his own account and on behalf of Serov, his idol.

"It'll be a lesson for you," Antonina Petrovna comforted him. "You must profit by it. You must study but you must not imitate. And it's no good taking offence. I don't mind telling you in strict confidence that many artists would be highly flattered to have their work taken for copies of Serov."

Chapter 2

IT'S NOT THE GODS WHO MIX THE POTTER'S CLAY

... In short, in the circumstances, he reasoned as youth will do when it has already attained something ...

N. GOGOL

There were many more trying days for Kolya. Now and then he took too great liberties with his drawing, particularly in the matter of composition. This came of the sweeping vigour of his imagination, his gift for capturing and following up relative values which passed unnoticed by others, his bold—sometimes too bold—search for striking points. All this won him the hearts of his class-mates, who began to imitate him. But the imitations were not a success, for, being copies of the final picture, they showed none of the clear thinking and well-developed intuition which distinguished Kolya's work. Naturally the others got poor marks, which they thought unfair. "Why did Dmitriev get 'Excellent' for the same kind of drawing?" The resulting situation interfered with that rigorous academic discipline which is essential to serious training in art, and some of the teachers thought it necessary in the general interest to curb the too advanced young artist.

Kolya began to get lower marks for his art work; he could not understand the reason for this and for a short time he even lost heart. Fyodor Nikolayevich was worried, too, and went to see Uncle Volodya to get his advice.

"Don't let it worry you!" Uncle Volodya reasoned with him. "Nobody's going to get him down, for nobody can—I've al-

ready explained all that to you. He's been getting a little too independent, he needs some rigid training. Let them give it to him now, and he'll only profit by it!"

"You go in too much for the unusual," Antonina Petrovna in her way began consoling Kolya. "You must try to see in ordinary things some aspect which others have not seen, something that is all your own. Find the unusual in the ordinary and in unusual things find what is typical. Then your work will be true to life, vivid and vital."

Professor Gaiburov, whom Kolya went to see during those difficult days, had much the same opinion.

"They're quite right, old man," he told Kolya. "It's a wonderful thing to be able to portray ordinary things and ordinary people convincingly. It's the ordinary people who decide everything. After all humanity, apart from exceptionally gifted beings, consists of ordinary people. But that doesn't mean that ordinary people are a drab lot. A drab lot would not have been able to accomplish in a thousand years what our people have accomplished in three decades. What you must learn about our country, my friend, is that the ordinary has become sublime."

Kolya now plunged into his work with an inspired zeal, which was developing into a real passion. He would come from school, swallow a hasty meal and sit down to work. There was never any need now to remind him that it would do him no harm "to sweat a bit." In fact, he had to be coaxed to go out for a breath of air, and at times Natalia Nikolayevna would have to take away his paints and pencils by force. One day Zhenya, tired of waiting for Kolya in the yard, came to hurry him up, and caught his friend in the oddest pose in front of the looking-glass. Kolya, his body bent far backwards, was trying with his

mother's scissors to clip a non-existent coat-tail, all the while making the most hideous faces. Kolya was deeply embarrassed at having been caught trying out the pose for an illustration to Krylov's fable "Trishka's Coat."

Afraid of being jeered at for excessive zeal and, besides, finding it inconvenient to carry about a large sketching-pad, he got himself one small enough to go into his pocket and now never parted with it. He would draw in it a school during lessons in general subjects; and it would be taken away from him and returned only after a solemn promise to behave properly in future. He drew in buses and in the underground. When he went to bed he put the pad under the pillow, saying: "I might get an idea from a dream." If ever he did find himself without the pad, he would take any sheet of paper at hand to jot down whatever at the moment came into his head. He even had no compunction now about using Katya's exercise-books, and again she would be annoyed to see Kolya's drawings adorning the covers and sometimes even a page on which she had just done a sum. This led to high words.

"He's ruined my essay again, Mum. He's gone and drawn an ugly mug over it," Katya would wail.

"It's not an ugly mug at all—it's Don Quixote!" Kolya would reply indignantly. "The Knight of the Rueful Countenance."

"I won't have your rueful countenances all over my essay. We had to write a composition on Chekhov's 'Kashtanka.' Rub it out this minute!"

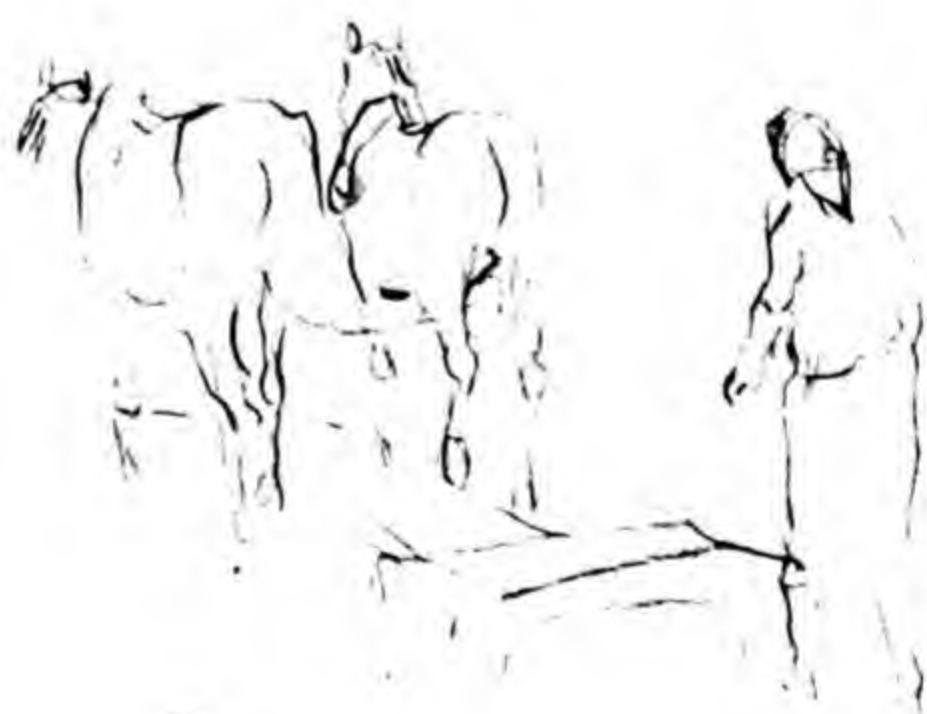
"You don't have to shout! Some brothers get understanding from their sisters, but I can expect nothing from you."

"You're not such a great artist yet to have everybody dance attendance on you. Don't act as if you were a genius." And Katya began to pout, her lips trembling. "You ought to be



III
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11/11/11



Pencil Sketches (Boy Seated. At the Telephone. In the Field)

more considerate of others. Is it my fault that you're so wonderful, and I'm so ordinary?"

"Don't call me wonderful! I'm just as ordinary as you are!" he cried.

The noise brought Mother and Dad to the scene. In such instances Mother was always ready to side with Kolya while Dad supported Katya.

Kolya decided to draw a portrait of Katya as a holiday gift to please Dad. Proud Figgimigigit who of late had felt resentful of Kolya refused at first to sit for the portrait. Kolya humbled himself to the extent of being willing to part with the small green chest which had once contained lozenges and was now one of his dearly valued possessions. So, it was finally agreed that Katya would sit for her portrait. To be on the safe side Kolya insisted on a written promise from his sister: "I herewith promise to sit for my portrait one hour a day for three days in return for the green chest. Katya Dmitrieva."

Kolya put the note away in a drawer where he kept other business papers, among them one signed by his mother.

"I, Natalia Dmitrieva," it read, "promise to pay to my prodigal son, Kolya, the sum of five rubles (no less) in cash for having recovered a pair of lost knitting-needles, the whereabouts of which was known to the same Kolya, rogue and deceiver."

This note which he had himself written as a joke had helped Kolya to wheedle out of his mother the money he needed for buying a series of reproductions of Serov's pictures which had taken his fancy at the booksellers'.

As for Katya, eager to earn the green chest, she kept honestly to her part of the bargain and did her best to sit

without the slightest movement, her small face expressing quiet dignity.

"Why, Katya, your eyes are not at all bad," he told her as he drew. "To tell the truth, they lighten up beautifully that Figgimigigit mug of yours."

Katya jumped up.

"So you're calling me names again. Well, I'll just walk off and leave you . . ."

"What about the green chest?"

"Don't care."

"All right, I promise I won't anymore. Come on, sit down. Only don't get puffed up trying to make sure everybody knows you're proud to be the leader of the Young Pioneers' squad! Don't worry—I'll get that into the picture, too."

Whether Kolya succeeded in showing in the picture the sum total of Katya's Young Pioneer good deeds, is open to doubt. But the light-blue, unclouded eyes and the fluffy hair of a healthy, chubby little girl he portrayed with genuine affection. The portrait really came out very well. And on the anniversary of the celebration of the October Revolution it was presented by the artist and the sitter to Fyodor Nikolaevich, who was greatly touched.

Kolya soon became popular with his class-mates. Besides Yegor Chursin, with whom he shared a desk, he now made friends with two girls—excitable, rosy-cheeked Yulia Makovkina and her chum, Svetlana Fortunatova, whom Kolya aptly named *Svetofora** by combining the first syllables of her name

* *Svetofor* is the Russian word for traffic light. — Tr.

and surname. Her two eyes being differently coloured, the name suited her very well. The girls occupied a front desk, with Kolya and Yegor sitting right behind them. At first Kolya felt shy in the girls' presence, and the lively Svetofora took delight in squinting first her right and then her left eye at Kolya, making him blush to the roots of his hair. But at one of the lessons when Antonina Petrovna told the class they could do each other's portraits, which everyone thought very exciting and good fun, Kolya chose to draw Yulia Makovkina. And he lost himself so completely in what he was doing, as he usually did when carried away by something, that he was soon angrily telling Yulia Makovkina to stop wriggling and keep her pose. His drawing was successful, which could not be said of Yulia's portrait of him. This upset the girl very much.

"Never mind, you'll do it better some other time," Kolya comforted her. "My chin's hard to draw. I can't get it right myself though I've tried often from the looking-glass. It doesn't show enough character, I think."

After this relations between the two boys and the two girls were friendly and natural, in no way interfering with Kolya's class work. And the four finally became fast friends while making up the class wall newspaper, for which Kolya drew a caricature of Yegor and himself trying to sketch one Sunday in Ostankino near Moscow and getting chilled to the bone.

The drawing was so true to life that it made the whole class roar with laughter. Then Kolya, on an assignment from the Young Pioneers, designed a slide with a pretty frame for the list of pupils on duty.

But the girls were completely captivated from the day Kolya, planning to call on Uncle Volodya after school, brought

into the class a folder with his own drawings. During the recess he went out of the room, leaving the folder on his desk. Curious Svetofora winked at Yulia with her varicoloured eyes, beckoned to her and persuaded her to peep into the folder. There was no one else in the class-room as the girls undid the strings and, glancing apprehensively at the door, cautiously took the drawings out. What met their gaze seemed to both of them almost incredible. They had never suspected that the diffident, blushing boy who sat behind them could produce such work on the very same paper as they themselves used for sketching. They were so absorbed that they no longer paid any attention to the door.

They were amazed by Kolya's pictures of animals, each so different, so expressive, so full of character, and by his natural portrayals of groups of people. His landscapes were bathed in light, each conveying a definite mood and at once casting its spell on the observer.

The girls had seen many of Kolya's drawings and considered them good. But what they found in the folder obviously came from the very depths of the boy's heart, and must have been produced in moments of the greatest inspiration.

"Sveta, look!" whispered Yulia. "They seem to live and they're so fresh—I swear I've never seen anything like them."

"Who said you could look at these?" came Kolya's voice from behind them.

Before they had time to slip the drawings back into the folder, he was beside them.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourselves?" he asked reproachfully, undecided whether he ought to be annoyed or forgive the girls for their curiosity.

"Kolya, you've no right to hide such things," Yulia told

him vehemently. "Forgive us for looking at them without asking you, but you'd never have shown them to us yourself. You're terribly stand-offish."

Seeing that the girls had really been impressed by his drawings, Kolya magnanimously forgave them.

On Sunday everybody went to the Sokolniki Park where a skiing competition between two classes was to be held. The end of the run was at one of the radial paths of the park, and to everyone's surprise the first to appear round the turn of the path was a rosy-cheeked junior with a face of delicate mould under the peak of his woollen sports cap. He slid swiftly and lightly, energetically working with the sticks. He had left the others far behind, and after crossing the finishing line, without halting, he turned right about on his skis.

The class thought even more of Kolya after this. How confidently and boldly he had covered the distance, and how smartly he had made that turn at the finish, sending the snow whirling under his skis; according to expert opinion it was as fine a turn as any of the best skiers could have made.

And none was as exultant as Yulia. Ever since she had looked at the drawings in Kolya's folder, Yulia seemed to think that she was somehow concerned in every one of Kolya's successes.

One day, a violent battle broke out between two groups of pupils in Form I. The opposing factions had called each other out before lessons began and only waited for the big recess to start fighting. Yulia, who had lately taken to patronizing Kolya, tried to talk him out of fighting.

"Think of yourself, Kolya, of what you are. You shouldn't

behave like the rest. Besides, you'll get hurt," she lectured him.

Kolya's only answer was a look of scorn before he cut swiftly into the enemy's ranks. Remembering the lessons he had had from Zhenya in the yard, he moved with lightning speed, at once knocking over several boys from the enemy's camp, tripping two others, and whooping and laughing rapturously as he pounced on a third. With hair ruffled and shirt hanging loose, Kolya, flushed and drunk with the excitement of the good-natured scramble, amazed everybody by his agile dodges and brilliant leaps. The enemy flinched and took to their heels, leaving the field to the victors, who, remaining in sole possession of the hall, surrounded Kolya.

"That was good stuff, Dmitriev, we'd have had a hard time without you," the boys were saying.

"Kolya's worth a dozen," Yegor, pleased, declared at least ten times.

Kolya was the hero of the day. His arm had been bruised in the scramble, and Yulia marched him proudly to the sink, where she washed and bandaged the bruises.

But glory, too, has its drawbacks. All the boys who had taken part in the fighting were severely reprimanded by the principal.

To make matters worse, at the algebra lesson, with the battle still fresh in the pupils' minds and everyone discussing it in whispers, the teacher caught Kolya and his three friends talking and sternly took them to task.

"Dmitriev, why aren't you doing your problem?" she asked.

"I'm doing it orally. I look at the board and do it in my head."

"Orally?" she repeated. "All right, will you be so kind then as to convey 'orally' to your parents a request to come and see

me at school. And, by the way, I want you three to do the same," she told the others. "No, wait a minute—I've changed my mind. I'll give you a written message. Come to the teachers' room after lessons and you'll get a note for your parents."

On their way home, where trouble lay in wait for them, the four chums pretended that nothing of any consequence had happened, that the whole thing was a trifling matter. They spoke in unusually loud voices, laughed, joked continually, and yet all of them were worried and ill at ease. Trying to divert his friends, Yegor declared that for a dare he would jump on the fender of a running trolley-bus and ride on it for a whole block.

"Don't do it," said Kolya, "I don't like that sort of thing."

Yegor glanced at him in surprise, recalling their outing to the Ostankino Park the previous Sunday, when Kolya had swung on a tree and jumped from branch to branch in imitation of the baboons in the Zoo.

"Scared?" asked Yegor.

"No, I'm not scared, but... how can I put it? Well, if doing a thing like that meant that afterwards I'd be able to draw just a little better, I'd do it. But, otherwise, what's the good of it? It's not very exciting, nor amusing, and you risk losing a leg. Anyhow, today I'm not in the mood for things like that."

"He's right, quite right," said Yulia. "You get funny ideas, Yegor. You've got to understand." And she gave Yegor a meaning glance, indicating Kolya.

Kolya caught the glance and the meaning behind it. So Yulia thought he was a budding genius and had to be treated accordingly. It made him so angry that without saying a word he quickened his step and walked on ahead of the others. He

was so much upset by all that had happened that he had made up his mind to drop in at the Gaiburovs' before going home.

The professor was out of town, but Yura was in, and after listening to Kolya's story advised him to make a clean breast of it at home. As to the battle they had at school, Yura frowned and paced about the room, snapping his fingers importantly at every step in the manner of his father and saying that apparently it was no easy matter to enforce discipline among art students, but he was not very strong in his condemnation. He gave Kolya a dressing-down for taking part in the fighting, but asked: "Who won? Your group? Good for you! I don't quite mean that—frankly, I think the whole business was a disgrace, but well—once you're in a thing like that you might as well fight hard to win." When he heard of Yulia's patronizing airs and the argument she had used to keep Kolya out of the fight, he whistled and said:

"Just think of this lady patron of the arts! A joke I call it. Don't let anybody single you out from the rest—that's disgusting."

"I can't stand it myself," said Kolya.

"That's the spirit. Remember you're a Young Pioneer and so you must never place yourself above others . . . But then I can see your Pioneer work at school is not carried on properly."

Kolya had a bad time at home when he produced the teacher's note that had been scorching the inside of his pocket. Also he had to listen to many unpleasant things at the Pioneer meeting two days later. If he was making good progress in the arts subjects, he was told, it didn't mean that he had to be humoured in other matters.

But what had really made the deepest impression on Kolya was his talk with Yura Gaiburov. It made him think how he

hated being "singled out." He was getting frankly annoyed at Yulia's adoration of him. Kira had been so different. He recalled her radiant, sympathetic eyes, the deep, sincere faith she had in him and the delight they took in sharing their common secret. Yulia, despite an unconvincing show of indifference in the class-room, betrayed a rapt admiration which always put Kolya on his guard. And in the long run it led him to quarrel with her over a trifle.

The two girls had hidden his cap and refused to give it up unless he "asked sweetly" for it. Kolya, too proud for that, went off without the cap, although only a short time ago he had been in bed for some days with flu. Yulia, already feeling ashamed, caught up with him in the street, but he wouldn't take the cap and broke into a run. She ran after him, and Yegor declared afterwards that Yulia ran after Kolya and he ran from her like the devil from incense. The whole thing was the kind of muddle that is often the cause of stupid quarrels among children. Kolya saw that Yulia was unhappy and trying to find ways of making it up with him, but he did not respond. At the end of her patience, she tried to catch him as he was leaving school one day and make him listen to an explanation. When she spoke of their friendship as being purely platonic, Kolya looked quite inscrutable.

"No, Yulia," he said, "it's best the way it is. I've suffered too many disappointments in life already."

He walked away with what he thought was a melancholy and mysterious air. But no sooner had he caught sight of Yegor kicking a lump of ice along the slippery pavement than he completely forgot his disappointment in life and began racing down the street after the piece of ice, getting it out of his chum's reach with shouts of: "Chase it! Chase it!"

Winter slipped by with its study terms, the winter holidays, the round of New Year parties, the written tests, the drawing of winter scenes from memory at home and in class. Some time before the spring examinations the class went with Antonina Petrovna to the Museum of History where the pupils made sketches of ancient clothing and utensils. A picture on a historical theme was the home assignment that followed. Kolya drew a picture of Moscow in the time of the boyars for which he made use of the sketches done at the museum. Mother and Dad thought the drawing very good. So, everyone at home was surprised when Kolya returned that day from school with the rolled up drawing under his arm.

"What, wasn't it accepted? Have you got to do it over again?" Fyodor Nikolayevich asked anxiously.

Kolya averted his gaze, reddening.

"I didn't hand it in."

"Why?"

"Well, you see, Dad, none of the others had finished theirs, so I thought I wouldn't like to be the first. They might set me up as an example and I'd hate that."

Kolya handed in the drawing two days later when all the others handed in theirs. But all the same the class voted it to be the best.

The annual examinations went off quite smoothly. Each day Kolya came to school earlier than usual to kick a football about the school playground for a while with Yegor and a new friend, Vitya Volk, an awkward, comical boy. This gave them no time to feel nervous before the examination.

Vitya Volk had black, beady eyes, wide-set and sparkling under a low, overgrown forehead; his small ears jutted out and a very short upper lip separated his protruding little



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Мамонтов

Pencil Sketch of V. S. Mamontov

mouth from his turned-up nose. Despite his fierce-sounding surname,* he looked rather like a plush Teddy bear. Vitya was having a difficult time. He had lost his father so long before that he could scarcely remember him. His mother was a sick woman, and if the school had not come to the assistance of this capable, serious-minded boy, he would not have been able to continue his studies at all. Whenever his mother was ill, it was now arranged that he should board at the school. Vitya had become a frequent visitor at Kolya's home, where Natalia Nikolayevna always tried to treat him to something good and tasty. But the modest, rather awkward boy with the Teddy bear face had a great deal of self-respect and sensitive dignity, and Kolya kept warning the family never to show him any pity, nor to force delicacies on him. "He hates it!" Kolya would say and add: "You don't know what Vitya is like!"

During the last quarter of the term Kolya grew very friendly with Vitya and they studied together for the examinations.

Class-rooms during the examination period were full of flowers. Tables and window-sills were laden with pots and flower bowls. But all the flowers in the world and all their fragrance would be no consolation for failing in the Russian written examination.

Kolya was a little nervous about his Russian for he could not always rely on his grammar. Yulia had generously offered him the use of a crib stuck away among some flowers near by. But Kolya whispered: "Thanks, I'll try to manage without it."

Most of the pupils had finished writing and the pile of papers on the teacher's desk was growing. Kolya kept on

* *Volk* means wolf in Russian. — *Tr.*

writing and Yulia also remained in her seat. She could have handed in her paper long ago, but she waited, ready to come to Kolya's assistance if he made an appeal. At last, pale, with red spots on his cheeks, he got up, took a step towards the teacher's desk, and then, thinking better of it, hastily went back to his seat. For another few minutes he kept looking through his paper. Everything seemed to be all right and he got up again, went to the teacher's desk and handed in the paper. Then, suddenly remembering something, he asked to have the paper returned to him to check again.

Curious faces peeped in from the corridor. At last they saw Kolya make his final trip to the teacher's desk. Screwing up his eyes and puffing his cheeks, he put down the paper and, without turning, ran to the door.

His fears were unfounded, for he got "good."

He had also made out well in his other exams.

When the examinations were over a spring exhibition of drawings and paintings was opened at the school and quite a number of Kolya's pictures were picked for it. Among them was a coloured illustration for Krylov's fable "The Eagle and the Hens," extremely vivid and expressive, with white hens pottering about in the green grass, and the eagle with his great beak perched on the roof of the cottage. There were two other illustrations—for Nekrasov's "Hop-o'my-thumb" and a very forceful one, all movement and colour, for Lermontov's "Song of the Merchant Kalashnikov"—as well as a splendid study of an old man, a subject given in class.

One day, as he peeped into the hall devoted to the exhibition, Kolya saw a group of seniors crowding around his contributions.

"I wonder how long he's been studying," he heard someone ask.

"What do you think of the colours?" put in a tall lad wearing a sweater.

"He knows how to handle his shading, all right."

"Do you mean to say he's only thirteen?"

Kolya was in two minds about going in. Suddenly he caught the excited, confident tones of Yulia's voice as, triumphantly and in the manner of an experienced guide, she held forth to the seniors on the merits of Kolya's pictures.

"Whew! . . . Colour! . . . Shading! . . . How they talk!"

Kolya preferred to slip away.

In the hall he bumped into the Gander.

"What's the hurry?" asked the Gander. "Why don't you go in and hear what they're saying about you? Looks like you're getting along fine. I took a peep at your work too and I understand a thing or two about painting. In my opinion your mind's on your work and you've got ability. Only watch you don't get a swelled head, Kolya Dmitriev. Let others praise you for all they're worth—that's their business. But yours is to nag at yourself, to tell yourself that you still have a long way to go to reach the top. Bear that well in mind, see?"

On the point of walking off, he stopped and beckoned to Kolya.

"You might be interested to know, Kolya, that I'm going off to a health resort," he said. "I've been given a place in a sanatorium. This old body of mine needs an overhaul. Then the doctors tell me I've got a disease with a long fancy name. In ordinary language it's just high blood pressure. I was examined by a doctors' commission and they've recommended sanatorium treatment. Of course, it's paid for by the state

and I set out tomorrow. After that I'm going to visit my daughter in Leningrad. She's a student at the Physical Culture Institute and getting to be a highly educated person. Like you, she's making excellent progress, and in no time, let me tell you, she'll be a champion athlete. She's already won second prize in an athletic competition. So don't be too proud of yourself, Kolya Dmitriev, for everybody's got the chance to develop his talents to the full."

Chapter 3

THE COLOURS OF DAWN

At times he forgot everything when he picked up his brush, and tearing himself away from it was like waking from a wonderful dream.

N. GOGOL

An hour before rising time in the Young Pioneer camp where the pupils of the art school were spending the summer, Kolya was found to be missing. His bed was made up, but there was no sign of him. This was very strange and caused quite an alarm, for during the ten days of his stay in this camp on the bank of the Oka River, Kolya had come to be regarded as a well-behaved camper, punctual in all things.

The night before he had reported at roll-call, had gone with the rest to wash, went to bed at the usual time, and had been in his place when the boy on night duty made his rounds. And now he had vanished, as if the earth had swallowed him up.

Where could Kolya have disappeared to—a youngster never known to indulge in the usual boys' pranks, and having a

capacity for work that had become proverbial among the school's juniors? "That fellow Kolya Dmitriev in Form I paints all day long," the children said of him, "he must be a bit off or something."

For the first few days in camp Kolya had gone about in a sleeveless vest and got sun-blisters. Everybody teased him saying he had burned himself up with work. And now where could he have disappeared to?

Sergei Pavlovich at once started a search. The children, formed into groups, were delighted to call themselves "search parties," going off beyond the camp's territory. The boys were pleased, for the affair offered unexpected fun, but the girls, especially Yulia Makovkina, had the most fearful misgivings. As they left the camp, skirting a birch copse on a little hill and approaching the woods, they all started shouting: "Kolya! Dmitriev! Yoo-hoo!"

"What's the ma-t-ter!" came suddenly from somewhere behind them.

They all stopped, and Kolya Dmitriev walked quite calmly towards them from the shelter of some tall birches on the slope of the hill. A bulky, handsomely-bound volume of Turgenev was stuck into his belt and in his pocket was the inevitable sketching-pad.

"Where've you been?"

The children crowded round him.

"I've been here all the time."

"How's that? We've just passed here, combed the whole place. Have you dropped from the skies?"

"Perhaps," said Kolya evasively. "Has the bugle sounded? I didn't hear it."

"Never mind that!" they shouted at him. "What has the

bugle got to do with it? You frightened us all out of our wits. We saw your bed was made, but there was nobody in it. Where've you been?"

Kolya, embarrassed, made no answer. To his rescue came the distant echoes of the Pioneer bugle, sounding reveille in the camp.

In the general relief and satisfaction that the search had ended in success and Kolya had been found, he was not questioned too closely as to where he had been. Sergei Pavlovich had an urgent call to go to Moscow that day and told Kolya he would look into the matter when he returned.

During the afternoon rest Vitya Volk, poking his head out of bed, asked in a whisper: "Come on, Kolya, if it's not a secret, let's hear where you were this morning."

"Very well," Kolya whispered back. "I'll tell *you* because you'll understand. But I won't tell anybody else. I was terribly keen to be the first to see the sunrise—the very first, before any of the rest of you. I've got it in my head to paint a picture called "Early Dawn" or "Happy Journey." Every time I want to see the sunrise it happens that I either oversleep or the weather's bad, but today I managed to wake up when all of you were still sleeping. The birds were singing and then they suddenly stopped, as they always do just before the sun rises. So I got up and slipped out. I climbed the highest tree and I was the first to see the sunrise—I saw the very first ray of the sun."

"And what was that book you had?"

"Oh, that!" Kolya laughed apologetically. "I took a volume of Turgenev with me to see if his description of the dawn was true. And just think, Vitya, it's as exact as can be! How Turgenev could feel and see things! I nearly tumbled off the tree, I was so excited! Vitya, let's slip out tomorrow morning before

Sergei Pavlovich gets back, and do a sketch. Only don't let on to the others, or they'll all want to come."

Early next morning Kolya and Vitya Volk swung their bare feet at the same time over the sides of their beds, carefully stepped on to the painted floor, which felt very cold, hastily made their beds, glanced at the sleeping Yegor and at the rest of the boys, and climbed out of the window of their one-storey cottage, their trousers and jackets over their arms and their boots dangling by the laces.

"We'll be back before the bugle-call."

They dropped on to the ground under the window, hastily pulled on their boots and trousers and, shivering in the morning chill, huddled into their shirts.

"We ought to have wakened Yegor," said Vitya.

"As if anyone could wake him!" objected Kolya. "Don't know anyone as fond of sleeping as he is!"

Five minutes later, their teeth chattering, they sat wet with dew on the uppermost branch of the tallest birch-tree. As they looked eagerly towards the east, the chill of the early morning went right to the marrow of their bones. The cold air was motionless and there was a peculiar stillness, fraught with expectant solemnity; all things seemed to listen for the first, as yet soundless, steps of approaching morning. The boys settled close to each other on a heavy bough and Kolya took out his Turgenev and his sketching-pad from under his shirt.

"Now, Vitya, look and remember what you see, while I read Turgenev's description. How simply he writes and he describes just what we're seeing now. 'Everything around was perfectly still, as it is only still towards morning,'" Kolya began in a half-whisper, as if it would be blasphemy to speak loudly at such a

moment. "All was sleeping the deep unbroken sleep that comes before daybreak."

Beyond the Oka, which they could see clearly from their position at the top of the tree, the last star had long faded. Against the sky, which was beginning to grow pale, the dark line of the horizon suddenly stood out, glowing at the fringe; a gold-pink hue spread over half the heavens and was reflected in the cold mirror of the still river.

"A fresh breeze passed over my face," Kolya continued to read with deep feeling, although he was hard put to it to keep his teeth from chattering and to get his numb lips to move. "I opened my eyes; the morning was beginning.' Vitya, look, look around you and try to remember everything. 'The earth was wet...' So am I, Vitya, wet through and through... 'The leaves were covered with dew, and from the distance came sounds of life and voices...' D'you hear, Vitya, it's just like that now! Was that a cow? Did you hear? And something banged... 'A light morning breeze went fluttering over the earth. My body responded to it with a faint shudder of delight...' It's perfectly true—it does go through you, doesn't it? Rub my back, Vitya, I'm chilled to the bone. Now comes the most important thing. Be sure not to miss it. Any minute now—you just wait!"

Over the horizon, far beyond the Oka, something was breaking through. Above their heads the birch leaves gleamed as if they had been cut out of tin foil. The top of the tree's white trunk was suddenly gold and a warm rosy reflection slid down it to reach the very ground.

"There it is! There it is!" whispered Kolya, taking up the book again. "All around me, over the wide dew-drenched prairie, and in front, from forest to forest, where the hills were growing green again, and behind, over the long dusty road and

the sparkling bushes, flushed with the red glow, and the river faintly blue now under the lifting mist, flowed fresh streams of burning light, first pink, then red and golden, young, warm light.' How true and how well put, Vitya."

"It's not so warm," said Vitya, shivering.

"You have no feelings, Vitya! I'll go on reading: '... All things began to stir—to awaken, to sing, to flutter, to speak. On all sides thick drops of dew sparkled like diamonds...' " Kolya shut the book, pressed it against himself, looked round and stood up on the branch, holding on to the trunk with one hand.

"Vitya! I tell you we're no good! How can we find it in us to convey all this? A lifetime wouldn't be long enough to do it."

They appeared at camp, wet and shivering, in time for the morning bugle-call. And all through the day, during the setting-up exercises, at breakfast, and while painting from nature, they exchanged cautious winks and meaning glances as if the early morning had told them some great, important secret which no one else knew.

That same evening, as they were playing football at camp, Vitya, just before kicking the ball towards the goal which Kolya was guarding, shouted: "Look, what a glorious sunset, Kolya!" But Kolya caught the ball and sent it flying back into the field before he turned to look at the dark-crimson tints of the sunset glowing behind the woods.

"Yes, a fine sunset," he said, "but not fine enough to let you score a goal. There's a time for everything, a time for sunrise and a time for sunset, but the score's still no goal for your side. You can't put it over on me, either by day or by night, so don't try."

Life in camp was very interesting and you could work well. Kolya drew and painted every day for hours on end, for there were subjects for sketching everywhere. In Vitya he found a faithful and a patient companion. Yegor was somewhat lazy and thought that Kolya was overzealous, but Vitya was ready to follow him anywhere and never hurried him to get back. The boys understood each other perfectly, and had long discussions on art, and the place of the artist in communist society; they theorized, argued, and told each other of the books on art that they had read. Vitya had grown very much attached to his new friend. He was amazed to find Kolya so well versed in questions of art when these cropped up, and in matters concerning the lives of the great Russian masters like Serov, Surikov, Repin, Tropinin, Vrubel.

Kolya's own pictures became quite famous among the juniors in the camp. A general favourite was "The Pond," with tall birches reflected in the mirror surface of the water. The picture breathed the freshness of the woods and the chill of the water, impressing even the stern and exacting critic, Vitya Volk.

"How did you manage to convey the depth of the pond like that?" he asked in amazement. "You're doing fine! And I used to think—I tell you now—that you went in too much for originality in colour-schemes . . ."

Kolya made many discoveries that summer. Never before had he so clearly understood the passages he had underlined in the book on Chistyakov. "The artist who, honestly solving his problem, converses with Nature, looking her straight in the eyes, develops both as man and master," was one. Kolya now understood what made for true technique in painting, of which Chistyakov said: "When the heart sings in obeying the



Building a House

laws and is carried away by work, technique comes of itself." Things which the year before had been incomprehensible were now clear, evoking in him secret delight and a sensation of happy concord: "The law is derived from the very essence of Nature, and is not invented. It is in Nature itself that the true, ardent artist is ever discovering this law, endeavouring to learn and to understand it, and when he subordinates it to his own will as much as he can, he becomes free in creation."

Kolya tried to make use of every moment of this wonderful sunny summer, in order to discover, study and understand these hidden laws in all that surrounded him. He thought nothing of sitting for hours holding a maple leaf and gazing at its serrated edge, at the fine veins within its living texture, and comparing it with the edge of a butterfly's wing. He told Vitya Volk that he had read somewhere that La Tour, the famous French artist, using pastels to find tones delicate enough for the portrait of a beautiful woman he was painting, had collected the dust from a butterfly's wings to mix his colours.

Kolya learned to note unexpected resemblances in things. The tiny cups of the lily of the valley at first made him think of drops of milk spilled over the grass, and then of miniature porcelain insulators attached to a thread-like Lilliputian post.

"Look, Vitya! They're like young zebras grazing in the woods!" he cried, pointing to a copse of young birch-trees, with their black and white trunks.

Plucking an ear of rye with its long golden whiskers, he whirled it above his head in the rays of the sun. "It's like the stick from a Bengal light, isn't it?" he said to his friend.

A bee hovered over a flower before alighting on it. The wind swayed the flower, and the bee swayed in rhythm with it. Kolya, watching it all, heard the ringing buzz and saw the bee quiver

on an invisible stalk. He made a sketch in his pad, trying to bring out the affinity he sensed between the insect and the flower. Another time Vitya found him bending over a bunch of flowers which somebody had brought into the house.

"Look, Vitya," he said. "Just look at the delicate mist inside the white rose! And there's a crimson flame in the very depths of this one, and the shadows are like velvet. And look how tender the petals of this orange one are! They seem to be alive, fluttering like eyelids, don't they?"

His keen eye was now able to discern differences which had formerly evaded him in objects seemingly alike. Not merely the trees themselves, but their very shadows had each its own individuality—the light, quivering, playful shadow of the birch and the ponderous, spreading shadow of the oak.

When he sketched, Kolya was oblivious of everything around him. At times he would fling his pad on the grass, trying to get a view of his sketch from above, squatting on his haunches, throwing back his head, sucking his paint-brush, and once again setting to work. He never noticed the others when they crowded round, laughing at the way he stuck out his lips, frowned, made faces, jumped on all fours. But even the most confirmed teasers did not pester Kolya for long, because it isn't worth making fun of anyone unless he gets exasperated. And there was no distracting Kolya from his work, no shaking him out of his absorption. He went on working regardless of everything.

Preoccupation with his work, however, did not prevent Kolya from being one of the initiators of a pillow fight which broke out one night in the camp. It started in one dormitory, then spread to the next, and soon all over the camp in the moonlight white pillows were bumping softly against walls or heads.

Kolya, Vitya, and a number of the others who were particularly active in the fight were reprimanded during roll-call. And although Kolya pretended not to care, he was, in fact, upset about it. It was far from pleasant to have to listen to the stern words of the reprimand in front of the assembled camp, and the whole thing was out of keeping with the spirit in which Kolya spent the summer.

Soon afterwards Natalia Nikolayevna, who had begun to miss her son greatly, arrived with Katya to stay in the village near by, at the home of a certain Aunt Dusya. Kolya, enthusiastic as he was about his work, had long been feeling homesick. On the evening of the day his mother arrived, he asked leave to go to see her.

Natalia Nikolayevna and Kolya sat on the edge of the steep bank of the Oka. A warm fragrant breeze was blowing over the river, the woods, and, it seemed, over the whole world. It was very peaceful all around. The first star appeared above the horizon and its delicate trail, like a silver thread, was reflected in the glassy spray of the Oka. From afar came the voices of boys playing volleyball.

Kolya had already talked of everything to his mother. Now both were silent. Occasional clumps of earth, loosened from the shore, would drop into the water, causing ripples on the surface which soon grew smooth again.

"Mummy! Kolya! Where are you?" came Katya's voice from a distance.

Their mother was on the point of answering the call but Kolya stopped her.

"Sh! Let us sit quietly for a while longer, Mum. Don't answer for just a minute!"

For some time they sat motionless. And it seemed that Kolya

had put his ear to the silence which Nature, falling into slumber, wrapped round the evening's mysteries.

"It's so nice this way!" Kolya said in a whisper and nestled close to his mother's side.

He soon roused himself, stood up and called loudly to Katya.

"Why didn't you let me call out to her a minute ago?" his mother asked in astonishment. "I thought you had some secret to tell me."

"No, Mummy darling. I only wanted to enjoy the silence with you. Sometimes it's so nice not to talk."

On the last day of their stay at camp, after supper, a cold rain-cloud, looking like a jelly-fish, floated over the woods and the camp, trailing a ragged edge. They all gathered at the club in one of the cottages. The boys had picked up somewhere decaying bits of wood and they put out the light so that the wood shone with a faint phosphorescence in the darkness. The talk turned on the coming school term and the children grumbled at the large number of general subjects they would have.

"Why should we have so many general subjects?" said Yegor. "We have a hard time as it is!"

"We're going to have it harder still!" Someone could be heard sighing in the darkness.

"Even skating will be out of the question!" came from another corner.

Kolya's anger was roused.

"You'd better shut up, Yegor," he said. "We've no right to grouse when painters like Fedotov, Levitan and Shevchenko had such a hard time. Look at the effort they had to make in their time to learn. Think of that and tell me if we've any cause for complaint."

"It's all very well for you to talk like that," protested Yegor. "You come of a family of artists. And remember Repin said, when he wrote about Serov, how important it was for an artist to grow up in an atmosphere where he would be surrounded by art."

But Kolya, who had given this particular question much thought, was not so easily defeated.

"What about Repin himself? Did he come of a family of artists? His people were army settlers who kept a wayside inn. And take the others, only Ivanov and Bryullov were brought up in artists' families. Surikov's family were Cossacks, not at all well off. Levitan's father was a railway cashier. Kramskoi worked as a village clerk himself. Tropinin and Shevchenko were serfs. Aivazovsky's father was a market supervisor and his mother a charwoman. Do you see how wrong you are! These painters lived in very hard times, and yet they won recognition. Isn't that right, Vitya?"

Vitya nodded in the darkness.

"And if nothing comes of us, it means not one of us is worth a brass farthing."

"Hear, hear!" a chorus of voices sounded in the dark. "Go to it, Kolya, go to it!"

Kolya, usually handicapped by his shyness in front of people, blessed the darkness which hid his flaming cheeks and went on:

"Listen, I've just been reading about Ivan Yermenev. He was a stableman's son, but he became a painter of historical scenes and was elected a member of the Academy of Arts. Besides he was in Paris and helped to storm the Bastille. That was in seventeen—er—"

"Seventeen eighty-nine," put in the omniscient Vitya.

"Oh, yes, seventeen eighty-nine!" echoed Kolya and continued eagerly: "He even did a sketch for an engraving and wrote on it: 'Drawn while in action!' What do you say to that? And we ought to live and act in such a way as to have the right to write the same thing about our pictures: 'Drawn while in action.' We live in times such as nobody ever dreamed of before. And we must prepare ourselves to take part in the building of the new life."

They sat up very late that evening, discussing the work of an artist, reading poetry aloud, recalling famous pictures.

Outside lightning flashed through the branches of the trees standing round the house. Muffled rolls of thunder came from far away. But in the little house, by the phosphorescent gleam of the decaying wood, the boys and girls, their red ties making dark patches against their white blouses, continued to talk with subdued emotion about art.

As they were not expected to keep camp rules on the last day of their stay, they returned very late to their dormitories.

The clouds had dispersed and the moon was sailing amid a thin drifting haze. The brilliant horned crescent formed a rim to the dim surface of the old moon.

"Do you know what that is?" asked Kolya, gripping Vitya's arm and pointing to the moon. "It's the reflection of the Pacific Ocean. I read about it in a book. So here we are in our camp seeing the reflection of the earth's biggest ocean on the moon. See how wonderfully things are related. And we paint still-life pictures and can't even get our cucumbers and pots into the right relation. Some artists we are, I tell you!" And he flicked the back of Vitya's head.

Chapter 4

KOLYA DMITRIEV'S "SALUTE"

To paint lightning, a gust of wind, a splashing wave from nature is inconceivable. The artist must keep impressions of these stored in his memory . . .

I. AIVAZOVSKY

When Kolya returned to Moscow, Vitya and he were even greater friends. Kolya felt he could show Vitya any one of his drawings without the fear that he would make fun of them, a thing Kolya dreaded, for he rarely went back to a drawing which evoked the slightest ridicule on the part of his friends. Kolya was for ever testing and experimenting, trying new pencils, new paper, mixing paints in saucers by the hour, and he needed somebody who would respect his experiments.

In Vitya he found the friend he needed. He was a zealous worker himself and an avid reader and he could understand that Kolya did not merely draw and make up compositions, but had really interesting ideas to put into anything he did. And nobody was better than Vitya at telling Kolya frankly, without flattery or effusiveness, what was good in his work and what was wrong with it. Kolya did a great deal of drawing and painting at home that he never brought to school, thinking it unworthy of the class's consideration. But to Vitya he showed everything. Vitya sensed well enough that Kolya felt surer of his ground than he did in many respects, although Kolya would have been the last to admit it.

He was always saying to Vitya: "You've painted that splendidly, Vitya! You're a wonder! I've been working and working at the same thing and I can't get it right." Then, noticing a flaw,

he would add more soberly: "It's not quite right here. That wasn't what you wanted to do, was it? If I were you I'd use a duller tone here. Don't you agree?"

By this time Kolya had overcome his faults in the sphere of colour, so that his water-colours were now on a par with his drawings, some even better. Gradually the great world of colour opened out before him, as in his childhood depth was revealed to him on a piece of paper when he first discovered the magic laws of perspective. At times he would still find himself infatuated by bizarre colour combinations and would be tempted to strive for effect, but gradually he rid himself of all such obsessions and rejoiced not in the striking, but in the true to life colour-scheme he was able to attain. Vitya and he often discussed colour problems and the general colour-scheme of a painting. Vitya underlined in pencil a passage in a book on Surikov, where the painter declared that even "a dog might be taught to draw, but you could never teach it colour."

They went often together to the Tretyakov Gallery, where each had his preferences. Kolya's favourite painters were Serov, Surikov and Vrubel; Vitya's were Repin, Levitan, Fyodor Vasilyev; Kolya knew almost nothing of Vasilyev, but Vitya introduced him to his work.

"Just think, he died so very young," Vitya said, as they stood opposite "A Wet Meadow." "He was only twenty-three and had no proper education in art. He was a jolly, reckless, inventive fellow. I read that he would sketch on the margins of his drawings schemes for getting billiard balls into their pockets. And once, when a party of artists rode over to the Imatra, he tried to shout above the roar of the waterfalls. Kramskoi called him the 'boy genius,' and Repin in his youth was influenced by him and said he was a 'young prodigy.' Just look how he paint-

ed the sky! He wrote in a letter that he was frightened by his own sense for certain tones. And he maintained that a picture must not dazzle by any of its separate parts, it must not be made up of a bright patch here and a bright patch there. Look at the complete harmony of his colour-scheme."

Kolya gazed gratefully at the canvas, which seemed to give off a moist, fragrant, almost tangible freshness; and he was deeply moved by the tragic fate of the artist. On returning to school, he at once rushed to the library to look for a book on Vasilyev. He found one and, opening it, read with a sinking heart the quotation from a letter written by the artist when he was ill, which served as an epigraph to the book: "I still believe that fate will not kill me before I have reached my goal." But fate, as Kolya already knew, had shown no mercy.

Kolya was not a bookworm; he was not satisfied to see the world through the pages of the books he read. He had an insatiable curiosity about the things around him, but he delighted in finding confirmation of his own conclusions in books and found that books helped him to test the correctness of his own thoughts and actions. He and Vitya spent hours talking over their favourite books.

They read Pushkin's "Mozart and Salieri" several times, at first separately, then together aloud in dialogue. Kolya offered to read Salieri's part, generously leaving to his friend the part of Mozart. But to Kolya's surprise Vitya refused point-blank.

"Nothing of the kind!" he growled and in a comical bear-like fashion, as he alone could, lifted his lips to his nose and began to move them. "No, you're going to be Mozart."

"And why must I be Mozart?" asked Kolya, unwilling to give in.

"Because it'll be truer that way. And that settles it!"

"So you think the part of Salieri suits you better? Well, I didn't expect that. You've got a secret wish to poison me, I see," he said jokingly. "A nice friend, I must say!"

"You may be Mozart but you're a fool," said Vitya, looking gravely at Kolya, "and fools, as you know, never amount to much in art. You've understood nothing."

"Come on, Vitya, no offence meant!" Kolya shook his friend by the shoulders. "I was only joking... This all reminds me of a famous actor—I think it was in England—who played the villain's part so well that one of the spectators really took him for a villain and shot him. The spectator was sentenced to death and buried alongside the actor. The inscription over their grave read: 'Here lie the world's best actor and best spectator.'"

"And there is a sequel to the story," put in the all-knowing Vitya. "When the actor got to Heaven's gate, all ready to be admitted, God, a great theatre-lover himself, was so impressed by his make-up that he also took him for a true villain and packed him off straight to Hell. So you see truth in art demands sacrifices. And I'm ready to make them. Now let's begin reading. 'They say there is no truth on earth, but is there truth in Heaven?'" Vitya recited in a self-pitying tone.

The two boys were completely baffled and irritated by Kipling's poem about the clever bone-carver, generously treated by his tribe but never taken either to battle or on hunting trips. His fellow-tribesmen admired the bone-carver's art, but they thought it was far removed from the truth. Did the mammoth surrounded by hunters really behave in the way the bone-carver showed it? Was that how the warrior flung his dart?—they asked themselves. The bone-carver was offended by their incredulity, but the tribe's wise man bade him take comfort, and bless the blindness of the tribe if he

did not wish to remain an ordinary tribesman and lose the admiration he enjoyed.

"That's simply outrageous!" Kolya cried indignantly. "I believe the opposite: art must open the people's eyes and help them to see truth and beauty. But in Kipling's story the artist is told to rejoice in human blindness—that must be some sort of obscurantism."

Kolya's all-knowing friend rose tenfold in his estimation after an argument they had at school about a water-colour portrait of Lukomskaya by Serov. Vitya declared that Serov's title for this picture was "Portrait of Lukomskaya." Kolya, who regarded himself quite an expert on Serov, maintained that it was "Portrait of Dragomirova." They each bet a "Ruslan" pencil, at that time very popular in their art school. Medvedev, a boy in the fifth form, was to act as their arbiter. He sided with Kolya, declaring that Vitya was wrong and that the picture was a portrait of Dragomirova. Kolya's prestige was so high with the class at that time that Vitya was dismissed with a wave of the hand. "Of course it's Dragomirova! You don't know your Serov, that's all!"

Off trooped nearly the whole class to the Tretyakov Gallery, where it was discovered that the portrait really was of Lukomskaya. Kolya was crest-fallen but he stuck stubbornly to his point.

The next day Vitya, whose sense of fairness was very strong and who was fastidious in all matters, brought to the class a book containing a reproduction of the portrait which had caused so much argument. Beneath was the inscription: "Lukomskaya, née Dragomirova."

Nobody won the pencil. But the prestige of the two friends was firmly established in the class.

Kolya's picture "The Warrior's Outpost" gave rise to a good deal of heated argument and discussion in the class. To everyone's surprise and a little to the embarrassment of Antonina Petrovna, Kolya showed a huge, massive steed of powerful strength with its back turned to the spectator, and also a back view of its rider, the warrior. The coat of mail fitted closely over the stalwart, rounded shoulders of the knight, whose invisible gaze was fixed on something in the depths of the picture, something in the distance, which apparently filled him with alarm. The horse stood motionless, its hoofs in the grass-grown soil.

Kolya did not reply at once to the objections of his classmates.

Then, blushing violently, he made an effort to explain his idea. "You see, Vasnetsov is one of my favourite painters. There is so much of the mysterious in his paintings that as you look at them the legends he paints seem to be whispered in the twilight. But I never feel quite happy or at ease in front of his "Warriors," although I find the picture a very powerful one. That is why I have tried to place my warrior in quite a different position."

Antonina Petrovna did her best to convince Kolya that the position he had chosen—turning his warrior and steed with their backs to the beholder—was not a happy one and detracted much from the beauty of the picture.

At about this time Kolya had some trouble in literature with an essay he wrote. The theme was Pushkin's *Dubrovsky*, and Kolya, after writing all he knew about Dubrovsky, one of his favourite characters in literature, ended his essay with an account of Dubrovsky fighting in Paris at the barricades and dying heroically. In the margin, the teacher put a big



Sobakevich (An Illustration to Gogol's *Dead Souls*)

question-mark in red pencil and added: "Pushkin never wrote this!"

"But I did," said Kolya rather dejectedly, taking back to his desk an exercise-book with the essay marked "good."

He had just realized that he had unwittingly added to his essay an episode which existed only in his imagination—one which he had actually depicted in a sketch for a drawing composition on Dubrovsky. He had worked on it with such ardour that he had ended by believing that Pushkin's hero had really met his death at the barricades.

"I drew it," he said, trying to put himself right with the class, "because I can't bear to think of Dubrovsky vanishing without a trace. A man like that must have found some way to justify his existence."

The class went on a second excursion to the History Museum. Kolya made his way to a window overlooking the wall of the Kremlin and stood for a long time watching the winding queue outside the Lenin Mausoleum. He did a pencil sketch at home for a composition to be called "At Lenin's Mausoleum." But he decided to do the picture itself later, feeling that he needed to muster all his ability to convey in painting what he had seen and felt as he looked out of the window into the narrow passage between the Kremlin wall and the History Museum, where the human tide slowly and silently pressed on towards the Mausoleum.

He knew that he still had much to learn before he could tackle a theme of this kind.

Kolya's pictures that year covered a wide range of subjects. He drew himself in the barber's chair, draped in a towel. To

draw the back of his head he played about for a long time with two looking-glasses, craning and twisting his neck till it ached. He drew the holiday bazaar at Pushkin Square and scenes at the Central Stores. At last, after endless visits to the Zoo, he managed to sketch the shy deer. He drew a tiger gnawing at a bone, the head of a lioness and an elk. He did several illustrations for Turgenev's "Raspberry Spring."

He began a self-portrait, but reached the painful conclusion that his face was so inexpressive and commonplace that it wasn't worth the effort he was putting into it. And so the self-portrait remained unfinished. But his picture "Song of the Merchant Kalashnikov," based on Lermontov's poem, won the admiration of the class. It was an entirely original work and showed such knowledge of fisticuffs that boxing fans who saw it couldn't help feeling that the artist himself must be pretty good at it. Two other pictures, "Fire" and "Tanks," also met with general approval; in "Tanks," the heavy armour of the tanks, dull with rain, contrasted with the quite different texture of the tankmen's wet shining leather suits.

He strove first to get the right atmosphere in his drawings and water-colours—a bluish, mysterious stillness in "Moonlit Night," the autumn air in "Botanical Gardens," the woolly, frosty mist in "Winter Street," with the shaggy-legged, rime-covered horse from which steam seemed to be rising. Then there was the rain-washed "Wet Roof," gleaming in the sunbeams which broke through the clouds, and "Evening in Arbat Street," with its busy crowds and the twinkling of newly-lit lamps.

To many people his drawings, especially the sketches, seemed to have been done spontaneously, at a single stroke; they gave the impression of utter ease, of lightness and air.

And no one but Kolya himself, and perhaps Vitya Volk, knew how many times each sketch had been redone, how much effort the young artist had spent to attain this transparency and ease, and how many sheets of paper, rubbed into holes, crumpled and chucked away in a corner, lay at home and were afterwards thrown away.

"I've chucked away two pounds' weight of sketches," Kolya would report gaily.

Things were far from coming easily. And sometimes Kolya would be in for some severe criticism from his teacher for a drawing which had been acclaimed by his class-mates.

"Don't strain too much after atmosphere," Antonina Petrovna was never tired of admonishing him. "Control your ardour. First of all learn to convey the exact position of the subject—that's the main thing. Study the position, and after you've done that see how you can express the *feeling*. Only then will you produce a truthful picture."

Kolya's and Vitya's thoughts had often run on these lines: position and feeling. How could they achieve a truthful synthesis of the two?

It was then that Kolya decided to start painting a picture which he had long been pondering and turning over in his mind.

The idea for this picture had first occurred to him on that memorable night in July 1943, when, shivering from the cold night air, and wrapped in a blanket, he had stood on the damp porch of the suburban cottage, while the first salute rolled from the distance and reflected in a flickering crimson against the sky. He had recalled Lieutenant Gorbach, commander of the self-propelled gun battery with whom he had struck up a friendship that summer, and he had thought that the

lieutenant was one of those whom the Moscow guns were saluting. Often afterwards, when he had run out into the street to watch a salute or sometimes even climbed on to the roof to get a good view, Kolya had tried to capture the elusive colours, glowing hot one moment and ice-green the next, and the marvellous play of fire and thunder. Again and again he had tried to put on paper what he had seen, but the result was dull and lifeless. He sought in vain for inspiration from pictures on the same subject by contemporary artists, who, he felt, had not done justice to the proud beauty of a victory salute; they had painted it in too flashy colours, failing to express the exultant joy of the salute, that made hearts glow like the skies with a sense of victory and brought so much delight to Kolya, Zhenya and the other boys watching it from the roof.

How to make a victory salute come to life again on paper? How to reproduce the magic lights that suddenly flashed across Moscow's evening clouds, the scarcely credible transformation of night into green-red day, and its sinking back to darkness?

The problem demanded a solution all its own. Kolya's thoughts turned to that last day in the camp, when he had pointed out to Vitya the moon's reflection of the Pacific Ocean. Perhaps that would be the best way of getting the effect of the salute—by showing only its reflection.

That was what Kolya did when he painted "Salute."

He did not draw the flying rockets separately, but showed the sky bathed in dazzling phosphorescence, and against it he drew the trunks and branches of the trees in the wintry boulevard. Sharply outlined shadows, almost black, as they always seem at such moments, shot violently forward, falling in the direction of the onlookers and cutting up the snow in

the foreground, which reflected the interplay of green and opal lights in a part of the sky which did not come into the canvas. A single cluster of rockets, or rather their cold green aura, peeped through the branches of a tall tree in the background. And the piece of sky, which gleamed magically behind the darkly twined boughs, was of a dazzling brilliance.

Kolya had managed to convey so well the sudden bright resplendence of the sky and the rushing shadows that one instinctively shut one's eyes for a fraction of a second on first looking at his water-colour.

Chapter 5

PEOPLE AND PORTRAITS

Sky, land, animals, people, good and evil—are all material for our art.

REMBRANDT

*Entry in Kolya Dmitriev's
note-book*

The cold weather had not yet set in, and Kolya in his spare moments ran to the Gogol Boulevard where, with a small pad on his knees, he made sketches. At that time Vitya and he were taken up with what they called "psychological studies." Whenever they travelled in a bus or by the underground they would pick a victim, one who had for some reason caught their attention, and in whispers start guessing his age, profession and character. There were so many people with so many different traits that the two boys were quite overwhelmed. But, undaunted, they pursued their object, trying to read people's characters from the suggestion of outward appear-

ance, clothes, manners, gait. On a single bus the trained eye could tell the worker from the idler, the student from the professor, the man with a dark past, the young actor with a future, and occasionally a fellow-artist.

There was, of course, no way of knowing whether their guesses were right, but Kolya believed the new habit made their eyes keener and developed their powers of observation. On the boulevard, too, they found plenty of scope for this form of "study."

Kolya liked to imagine the boulevard stretching before him as a double railway track and the people walking up and down as trains, continually meeting and passing on. They were all different, some being suburban and some long-distance trains, and Kolya soon discovered what time many of them kept.

At a definite hour, filling the air with the smell of lime and glue, jaunty lads and giggling girls would pass, their overalls sprinkled with brick-dust and smudgy with chalk and paint. These were young building workers going off for dinner; they had just come down the scaffolding of a tall building going up in the neighbourhood of Arbat Street. Ahead of them, puffing and swinging his arms energetically, walked a stout fellow, their team-leader most likely, and he really did give the impression of a powerful engine.

Every now and then, not unlike a suburban electric train, some housewife, loaded with supplies of all sorts, bustled by, making frequent stops, for she had cronies on all the benches along the boulevard.

Schoolboys tore by, some going straight home, and others playing in the boulevard, dragging one leg as they rushed about on scooters with red flags tied to the handles.

Girls from a neighbouring school kept staidly to their route, walking with arms linked in a row on either side of a young teacher. The girls at the far ends of the row were obviously jealous of those who had the privilege of being close to the teacher. As a result the row curved at both ends and threatened to become a ring as they walked.

The people whom Kolya imagined as long-distance trains passed without slowing down, absorbed, self-confident. They walked with an unhurried, dignified yet very rapid step, leaving a rising trail of autumn leaves behind them. These people had a clear idea of the road they trod and of the goal in front of them; nothing could swerve them from their path. Kolya's eyes followed them with deep interest and respect, trying to capture and remember their features as they moved on. They seemed to live some great, varied, alluring life.

A plumber in rubber boots came to take a rest in the boulevard. He took off his canvas gauntlets, placing them neatly on the seat beside him, rolled himself a cigarette, lit it slowly and with an expert eye judged the lay-out. There was something about him that at once betrayed the efficient, self-respecting workman.

Then there was an elderly nurse watching over a pram where a baby slept, swathed to the cheeks, and sucking at a comforter. The nurse always brought with her an alarm clock which she put beside her on the bench. When the alarm went off, she picked up the clock, put it in the pram and wheeled the baby off.

A frequent visitor to the boulevard was a little old man with clean-shaven lips and a funny little Vandyke beard. He wore enormous old-fashioned overshoes and always brought a newspaper which he read, holding it close to his eyes. Then

he would suddenly doze off, covered with the newspaper which fluttered like a child's kite above the snores.

Everything he saw was intensely interesting to Kolya.

For some days now he had been watching a thin little boy, slightly hunched and with a head too large for his puny, rigid little body. The boy would select a sunny spot on the boulevard and sit there muffled in a scarf, absorbed, round-shouldered, a little aloof, basking in the rays of the already cooling October sun. He sometimes tried to join other children at their games, but either he was too shy, or his sickly looks frightened them off, for somehow the children would not play with him, and Kolya felt that the boy was being shunned and treated unkindly.

On the third day he sat down on the bench beside the little boy.

"Do you think you could sit still for a little while?" he asked him. "I'd like to draw you."

"Draw me?" drawled the child in suspicious bewilderment. Then he seemed embarrassed. "D'you know how to draw?"

"I'm trying to learn."

"Why d'you want to draw me? You should draw nice-looking people, and I'm..."

"I like you and I'm going to draw you," said Kolya cheerfully, opening his pad.

"What d'you like about me? I'm ill. Mother brought me over to Moscow, and I'll soon be going to a sanatorium. They promised a place next week. We don't have to pay for it. I can't run much because I'm in a corset. Listen how hard it is." The boy flicked himself with a dry rapping sound beneath



An Illustration to Turgenev's story *The Singers*

his coat. "Would you like to touch it? Don't be shy, touch it!"

Rather than offend him, Kolya put out his hand and felt the hard unbending shell of a corset under the coat.

"A bomb did that to me," explained the boy. "We were travelling in a train during the war with my mother and it was bombed and I got what they call concussion of the spine."

"Now, you just sit still for a while and I'll draw your picture. All right?"

"All right," the youngster said gratefully. "How must I sit? Shall I put on a special look?"

"No, no, sit just as you were sitting before. Here's a book for you—you can read."

"No, I won't be able to keep my mind on the book. I'll just sit and wait till you've drawn me."

"Well make believe you're reading."

"Make believe? That's not right."

"Why isn't it?"

"You wanted to draw me as I am, and now you don't like me as I am any more. You don't, do you? Why are you looking at me like that?"

"How am I to draw you if I don't look at you, you funny chap?" said Kolya, and got down to work.

The boy sat motionless, except that every now and then he would crane his neck to get a peep at the drawing. Kolya quickly marked off the paper, fixed the outlines of the drawing and put in the connecting lines. In something like half an hour a pale child with great wondering eyes, a pointed chin, and a slight hunch appeared on the paper. The eyes came out particularly well, lighting up the whole face, and the boy in the drawing was, in his way, attractive and even handsome.

As Kolya drew, children came over from the sand heap, where they had been dragging red and green wheelbarrows about and making pies. Soon the bench where Kolya and his obedient model were sitting was surrounded by youngsters speaking in whispers, afraid to disturb the artist, but peeping cautiously at the drawing-pad. The little boy had now risen in their estimation, for it wasn't just anyone that an artist would draw, and they thought he must have done something to deserve the honour.

When the picture was ready, the model, his corset squeaking, got up, looked at it and turned pink.

"Am I like that? Or is it a make-believe picture?"

"It's just like you!" cried the children in chorus. "It's the image of you! Especially the eyes!"

"He has such nice eyes, they look so brave," said a plump little girl, hugging a huge red-and-blue ball.

Kolya had tried to subdue some of the signs of ill-health in the child's face. And he had chosen a pose that particularly concealed the rounded shoulders. The boy in the picture may have looked a trifle handsomer than he was in life. But Kolya had been deeply struck by the sad charm of the big wondering eyes in the pale little face and he tried to make them light up the whole drawing. For surely an artist had the right to bring out the beautiful in what might seem plain at first sight? At a Young Pioneer rally they had been reading the poetry of Jambul who had said truly that "poetry is the art of consoling without deceiving." Kolya had not deceived the little chap.

The children pushed each other out of the way to get a look at the drawing, exclaiming with delight at Kolya's work. But one small person, muffled in a heavy downy shawl, ma-

naged to get his chin on a level with the edge of the drawing-pad, peeped at the portrait and said in a deep, deprecating bass: "Not a bit like him. He's got no trousers."

"What hasn't he got?" asked Kolya, puzzled.

"No legs!" explained the plump little girl.

"There are photographs with no legs," came from behind.

"I'll draw the legs tomorrow," promised Kolya and, tearing the sheet neatly out of the pad, handed it to the thin little boy. "Here you are—you can keep it."

"For long?" asked the boy.

"For good."

The little boy seemed scarcely able to believe in his good luck. Carefully he took the drawing from Kolya and felt for the ground with the tips of his boots without taking his eyes off the picture. Then he slid off the bench and went along the path, holding the drawing close to his face, and followed by a train of envious and respectful children.

Another time a far less pleasant incident happened. Kolya was extremely amused by a lady in an incredibly large hat. Heaven alone knew how it kept in place on the top of her head. In front the hat had the look of a great awning. The general impression was that she was carrying a loaded tray on the head, and indeed she moved very carefully along the path as if she were afraid of dropping something. Kolya swiftly made a sketch of her; fortunately she did not seem in a hurry, and now she was drifting past him for the second time. He was so engrossed in his drawing that until a broad swaying shadow fell across his drawing-pad he did not notice she had stopped in front of him.

"What do you think you're doing, young man?" bellowed a deep menacing voice above his head.

Kolya looked up and to his horror saw the lady, obstructing half the view as she towered over him. He snapped shut his pad, but it was too late.

"Such brazen insolence!" she went on bombastically. "There he sits making caricatures. Nobody's given you permission to do that, and besides, I'm no model. I've a good mind to call a militiaman. Anyway, my nose isn't like that—you haven't learnt to draw properly. You've no business distorting the faces of grown-up people you've never even met. Go ahead and draw girls your age. There are some over there."

Kolya had turned crimson and stood twisting the drawing-pad in his hands, not knowing what to do.

"To my mind it's a very good likeness," he heard a self-assured male voice behind him, and, turning hopefully, he saw a very tall man in a loose-fitting overcoat and a broad-rimmed hat. A mischievous smile, dilating his well-chiselled nostrils, played on his sunburned face with its sharply defined cheek-bones. "Upon my word, madam, there's no need to make all this fuss. If I were you I'd buy the picture as a keepsake. The artist's caught you very well."

"Buy it yourself if you like it so much!" retorted the offended lady.

"I've no intention of selling it," answered Kolya, dejected.

"See, the artist isn't offering it to you," said the tall man.

The angry lady passed some deprecating remark which included both the artist and his defender. Then she went her way along the path.

"You don't mind my taking a look at these, do you?" the tall man asked Kolya. "What interesting things you've got

here!" he said, looking through the pad Kolya had trustfully handed him. "Have you been studying long? . . . Well, I studied art once myself but had to give it up because in those times there were other, more urgent things to do." He sighed and frowned. "But you aren't just playing around, I can see. You're taking up art as your profession, aren't you?"

Kolya nodded. There was something in the tall, well-built man that inspired one with trust. And Kolya, usually very diffident and reserved with strangers, felt quite at ease in this man's company.

"Art is a noble vocation. We need fine artists. There are so many subjects and such splendid people are growing up. Future generations will blame us if we fail to portray the life of today. Yours is an honourable task. You need talent and strength to follow your profession, and I think you have them. Are you a Young Pioneer?"

"I am."

"That's good!"

"It's good, of course," said Kolya. "Only . . ."

"Only what?" the tall man asked, surprise in his voice.

"Shall I live up to your expectations and what you've said? Sometimes I envy the boys who fought in partisan detachments during the war. I know a boy called Andrei Smykov who was adopted by a regiment at the front and then sent to music school. He fought in the war and marched through the Red Square with his trumpet during Victory Parade. Then there is Zhenya Striganov in our yard. He'll soon finish an apprentice school. He's earning some money already and it won't be long before he's a qualified turner. And what'll come of me still remains to be seen."

"What's your name, did you say? Kolya? Listen to what I'm

going to say, Kolya. When we built schools for you children in the very hardest times, denying ourselves everything and giving the best we had to you, we never thought that some of you would be exchanging your school pens, for example, or your water-colour brushes for guns or automatic rifles. It is not our fault that some of our youngsters have had to come through battle-line experiences alongside grown-ups—that's not what we planned for them. We can be proud of our young people who never flinched in their duty, but what we want you to do is to sit at your school desks, grow strong in Pioneer camps, fill your heads with the best that science offers, so that your eager young hands may be trained to accomplish good and useful tasks. Or, for instance, so that you may paint pictures extolling the beauty of our life. So you see, Kolya, you've no need to envy anyone."

As Kolya listened he was taking stock of the strong face with its broad, expressive mouth whose corners were lost in deep, energetic lines. What a pity Vitya wasn't around so that together they could try to interpret the man's character.

Meanwhile, the man kept glancing towards the far end of the path in an impatient and slightly worried fashion which betrayed the fact that he was waiting for somebody.

"Were you in the army?" asked Kolya, for he had the bearing of an army man.

The man's eyes rested absently on Kolya and then, having glanced again along the path, he rose abruptly and hurried to meet a beautiful, elegantly dressed young woman who was coming towards him. Kolya saw him approach her, remove his hat, take her arm and stroll with her up and down a bypath. After some time they sat down in a secluded spot; then suddenly she rose and walked rapidly away after hurling some re-

mark back over her shoulder. The man stood thoughtfully, eyes lowered and hands in the pockets of his roomy coat. Then he turned back along the path and Kolya saw that his face was gloomy and the corners of his mouth had retreated further into the lines about them.

He returned to the bench where Kolya was and sank down heavily beside him.

"So . . .," he said, breathing heavily. "What were we talking about?"

"I asked you if you'd been in the army," Kolya repeated.

But the man did not seem to be listening. His eyes were on the path along which the beautiful lady had disappeared.

"Eh?" he said, rousing himself and turning to Kolya with an apologetic, rueful smile. "That's someone you should try to draw. A beauty, isn't she?"

Kolya said nothing.

"Why don't you answer? Don't you think she's beautiful?"

"You won't be offended if I tell you?" asked Kolya.

Kolya shook his head. The man flung himself back a little and, looking at Kolya, asked in surprise:

"Why?"

"You won't be offended if I tell you?" asked Kolya.

"Why should I? We're talking seriously, man to man."

"Her features are regular," Kolya stammered a little. "But her eyes are unkind, there's no light in them, and that makes her face seem in the shade all the time, so that there's nothing you want to depict in her."

"Unkind eyes?" the man repeated meditatively, putting his large hand on Kolya's shoulder. "You think so? That's interesting. Well, you may be right, for I've not seen her for two years and she . . . Never mind. What was it you asked me? If I'd been

in the army? Yes, my boy, I've been, as Mayakovsky put it, 'mobilized and called up by the Revolution.' So, I've been fighting all my life and still am fighting."

"But there's no war on now," said Kolya.

"There's a big war for truth and for lasting peace. That's my battle-line."

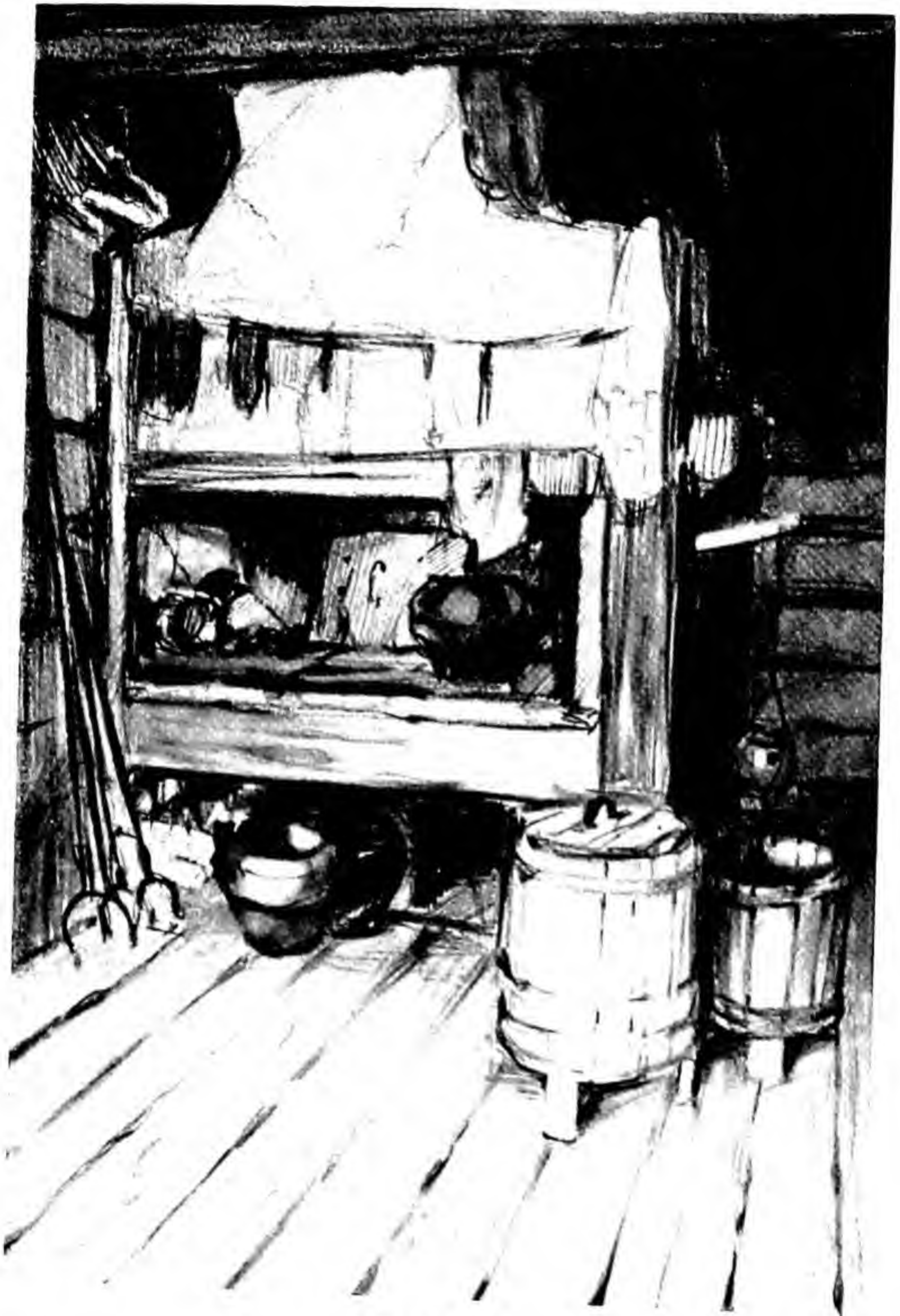
He rose and extended his large broad hand to Kolya. "Good-bye, Kolya. Thanks, my boy. Can't imagine what a good thing it is I met you. You don't know what I mean—well, you don't have to. Unkind eyes, you say. Interesting. Well, I'm sure we'll meet again. Will you be drawing here tomorrow? I'll come along."

He raised his hat, bowed and strode off, erect, carrying his sloping shoulders buoyantly beneath the loose-fitting coat.

He did not come to the boulevard the next day nor the day after, although Kolya, his interest aroused, would have liked another chat with him. And Kolya never saw him again.

There were other encounters.

One day Kolya was sketching a corner of the boulevard with the monument to Gogol seen in the distance. Absorbed, he did not notice a stranger approach and warily sit down beside him. He came so quietly that only a whiff of tobacco and a stale smell made the young artist look up at the intruder. He was a gaunt, bony, untidy old man, reeking of stuffy rooms, of moth-balls and something mousy. He took off his huge, old-fashioned checkered cap, which looked as if it had been made of a travelling rug, with ear-flaps turned up and fixed to the crown by a big button. With a smudged handkerchief he mopped the perspiration from his great pallid forehead, growing bald on top



A Russian Stove

and framed in long locks of hair which stuck to his hollow temples. His forehead seemed to be supported by the eyebrows as by two arches meeting over the bridge of his nose, which stretched crookedly between the lean, hollow cheeks and was so long that it almost intersected the sunken, thin-lipped mouth. From under heavy, drooping yellowish eyelids he glanced distastefully at Kolya's drawing.

"Rather interesting!" he said, leaning towards Kolya with a gust of stale odour. "Practising. Most praiseworthy. Are you, if I may be permitted to ask—sheer curiosity on my part—following the dictates of your own heart or is it your parents' will?"

"I'm studying at the Surikov Art School," replied Kolya, putting away his pencil.

The bony old man was a nuisance and Kolya began putting away his drawing-pad.

"Wait a while, young man. Where are you off to? Am I the cause of your gathering up your things? I beg your pardon then—I only sat down to rest a little. I'm in poor health. I didn't mean to be in the way, I'll go . . ."

He made as if to get up and put on his cap. Kolya said awkwardly:

"You're not in my way at all. Please, don't get up—I've finished anyhow."

"In that case, with your kind permission, I'll stay and have a little rest. So you go to art school. Budding talent, eh? That's how they speak of you. Well, well, that's highly praiseworthy. Most young people nowadays go in for utilitarian studies, for technical careers. Applied knowledge is what is valued most and art doesn't count for much. People have other things to do. And what made you, young man, pursue a profession promising

so little in the way of worldly rewards? Eh? May I take a look?" He took Kolya's drawing-pad and began turning the pages.

"Most assuredly you have a gift for it. But what subjects! Nothing of the ideal, the poetic. Nothing but life's prose. It's realism, so to speak. Long ago I taught at a St. Petersburg secondary school, young man, and this was precisely my subject—drawing. So you see I have the right to judge. Yes, I might say, you have uncommon gifts, but you are taken in by just the things that should disgust young people. You, like all your generation, have set out on a false and ruinous road. But there's not much use in my talking of it. It's the fashion to teach young people to go in for low subjects. That's not the way to begin. You should be drawing from the plaster casts of antique sculptures only, young man, till you get a firm hand for shading and acquire nobility of line. Antiquity, classical examples, unsullied whiteness, the eternal forms—must be your source of inspiration. Yet from your tenderest years you are taught to depict the dirt of the street, what was formerly called *mauvais genre*—janitors, dogs, motor cars. Thus art is degraded to cater to low tastes and political convictions held by what is now denominated the broad masses. In a word—propaganda. Am I right?"

"To my mind you are quite wrong. We work from plaster casts all the time," cut in Kolya determinedly, taking back his drawing-pad. "But we all think quite differently now."

"And what do you think? Interesting, very interesting. And who, may I ask, do you mean by 'we all'?"

Kolya looked away angrily, regretting now that he had not gone off at once. Every word the old man spoke was hateful and contradictory to all that Kolya held dear; it showed in the

supercilious writhings of his thin lips and in his significantly arched brows. And his pretentious words and affected pronunciation breathed decay. But it was no use trying to leave now, for that would look like retreat.

"What do *we* think?" Kolya knitted his brows and looked around, as if seeking support. If only Vitya had been there, the two of them would have had the old wretch under cross-fire! Kolya, looking steadily into the old man's face, began: "I'll tell you what we think," and then continued more firmly as if he had made up his mind to an open battle: "We think that Repin, for example, would not have agreed with you, because you argue for aestheticism." Kolya suddenly reddened, as it always embarrassed him to use in conversation with grown-ups long words—especially words of foreign origin. "And Repin says an aesthete cares nothing either for Russia or for the truth which is in the people, or even for the future of his native land. All he wants is to steep himself in antiquity. That's what Repin thinks. And we all think the same."

"I see you've done some reading and can quote things. But may I ask again—whom do you mean by 'we all'? Surikov Art School students?"

"We—we're the ones you're against," Kolya blurted out, rather to his own surprise.

He rose with flushed cheeks, his eyes wide with indignation and radiating blue light. His jacket was open, and beneath it the red tie showed, perhaps not at all at the proper time, for the stranger said quickly:

"Aha! If I understand you correctly, young man, 'we' stands merely for Young Pioneers. Doesn't it, now?"

"Yes, for the Pioneers, too!"

"Now, don't you think that red tie of yours is like a noose

round the neck of a true artist to whom freedom of thought and creation is dearest of all?" asked the stranger, now openly aggressive and reaching with his bony finger for Kolya's tie.

Kolya jerked back, trying to keep this ghost of a man from touching his Young Pioneer's tie.

"Only the most backward people think that way now," he said. "And those who are against our Soviet way of life."

"You're almost ready to class me with the fascists, young man."

"Oh no!" said Kolya. "You're just a vanishing type."

"What, what d'you mean?"

"What I say. I've got quite a number of sketches of people like you."

Kolya took a vengeful pleasure in seeing the repulsive old man wince. "I call them 'Vanishing Types.' They're all sorts of beggars, people selling second-hand books in the street market, an old woman, a fortune-teller who lives in Arbat Street—I tried meeting her for a long time before I managed to sketch her. And I'm going to draw you, too—I've got your picture in my mind already, for I've had a good look at you."

"Well, I beg your pardon—I've given you no grounds," said the old man, alarmed. "Listen to me, young man . . ."

But Kolya, without a word of farewell, was striding along the boulevard as if nothing whatever had happened. Only the energetic way he swung his arm, the drawing-pad held tightly in his hand, betrayed the fact that he was pleased with the way he had spoken.

Yes, the man was undoubtedly an enemy. Kolya had never before come up against anyone so hostile, so ancient, so utterly rejected by life, lurking in its shadows and harbouring malice.

He must remember the type, show him up to others and be

able to recognize him again at once. Over and over again he sketched the same face in the margins of his grammar exercise-book. He sketched it on the covers and on the back of a page which had a quotation from the book *Tsushima* on it: "Now, while sailing on the battle-ship *Oryol*, I never stopped filling my mind with fresh knowledge and impressions." The face was repeated sixteen times, almost always in the same pose, with slight alterations in the features. But the narrow, malicious face with the broad, bladder-like forehead, crooked nose, and the repulsive smile evaded the artist's pencil. Kolya used up at least ten more pages to sketch the well-remembered countenance of the old man he had met on the boulevard.

"Who is it you're trying so hard to draw?" asked his mother. "What do you see in that disgusting face?"

"Oh, it's just a vanishing type."

Chapter 6

MORE PORTRAITS

Kolya often dropped in to see his grandmother, who lived quite near—just off Arbat Street.

"May I draw from your window, Grandmother?"

"Certainly, my dear. Draw as much as you like! But what can you find to draw from my window? The view's quite ordinary and there's really nothing interesting, unless that roof over there. You know whose house it is, don't you? It belonged to Herzen's brother. And Herzen himself often stayed here."

All the same Kolya spent hours drawing the view from Grandmother's window. Nor was the roof of Herzen's brother's

house the only thing that interested him. He was fascinated by the problem of conveying by means of planes of colour the skyline of red and green roofs, overlapping each other in uneven lines, which disappeared into the well-like depths of Arbat Street. This view he painted over and over again, always discovering in it something new that had escaped him before.

And every time Kolya went away, after letting his grandmother look as much as she liked at his sketch, she would move her arm-chair to the window, settle comfortably and gaze for a long time at the roofs and walls, astonished that she had never noticed before what a splendid view there was from her window.

Grandmother had a telephone and Kolya ran in often to ring up his friends. It always pleased her to hear him talk about art with his chums.

"Yegor?" Kolya would shout into the receiver. "Hullo—Kolya Dmitriev speaking. Listen, Yegor, d'you know how to draw a crow? You think I'm joking, but I'm quite serious. Can you draw a crow that looks like your own? I can't. Every time I draw a crow it comes out like a Serov crow, because I can't get it out of my mind. I try hard and I think: 'At last I've got it'—and again it's just like Serov's."

Kolya had interesting chats with his grandmother about pictures and painters. She understood painting and in her day had known many outstanding painters. In fact, Grandmother still had a few interesting friends, but how many boys or girls of fourteen take an interest in their grandmother's friends? Kolya had no idea, for instance, that his grandmother and his father had once gone to see Igor Grabar, venerable painter, critic and Member of the Arts Academy, whose books on Russian art Kolya was fond of looking through. Nor did he

know that his grandmother had secretly taken along with her a folder containing her grandson's drawings and had shown them to the famous painter.

The painter was very tired that day, having just returned from a fatiguing conference. Long used to the requests of grandmothers, aunts, mammas and papas to look at the work of their young prodigies, he took the folder more out of politeness than interest, opening it with weary indifference.

But a minute later, springing up from the sofa, he began taking out one drawing after another and putting them down on the table. Then, seizing Grandmother's hand and shaking it, he kept saying over and over again: "I congratulate you with all my heart! What talent!" He approached Fyodor Nikolayevich and grasped his hand, too. "Is that your son's work?" he said. "I never expected to see anything so striking. To tell the truth, I thought: 'Well, here's another lad with some ability. I'd better take a look at his drawings to save hurting anyone's feelings.' But what I've seen is real talent. Take good care of him!"

Fyodor Nikolayevich had warned Grandmother to say nothing of this visit and Kolya never knew of Grabar's praise. He went on as usual, dropping in at Grandmother's to ask if he could use her telephone or to coax her into sitting for him.

"Kolya, my dear," she would say, waving her hand, "why should you want to draw an old wrinkled woman like me? Why don't you find some young face to paint? There must be some pretty girls in your school."

"What do I want with pretty girls, Gran?" Kolya cried impatiently. "What have they been through? What can I read in their faces?"

And he helped Grandmother into her arm-chair near the window or made her sit on the sofa while he drew her. When

Grandmother couldn't really spare the time, she would call in one of her neighbours, among whom Kolya met very interesting types.

One day he found in Grandmother's room quite an ancient little man with a bald sloping head, around which a light sparse down stirred at the slightest motion. The man had a small beard and his fleshy nose came down over a puffy lip. He was sipping tea, his shaggy lips moving stiffly, and as Kolya entered, he turned, glass in hand, to give him a look of kind indifference from under overhanging brows.

"You must make each other's acquaintance," said Grandmother, flustered. "This is our Kolya that I've spoken to you about. Kolya, meet Uncle Voka."

Uncle Voka moved his lips, raised his brows, and gave Kolya another kindly glance. Kolya shook hands with him and sat down unobtrusively on a chest in the corner. He remembered vaguely that a long time ago Grandmother had spoken to him about Uncle Voka, but she had so many friends and relations that it was impossible to remember them all. The old man kept sipping his tea and talking in a soft voice to Grandmother while Kolya sat on the chest studying the visitor. He found the shape of Uncle Voka's head extremely interesting, with the bulges of his sloping forehead over the eyebrows, and the fleshy ears. Quietly Kolya got out his drawing-pad and began to sketch the old man.

Absorbed in his work as usual, he did not notice his grandmother getting up and coming over to stand behind him.

"You naughty boy!" she cried. "Look, Voka, he's sketched you!"

Kolya, alarmed, hugged his pad, in case Uncle Voka would be angry. But the old man came over and with the professional



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gesture of a connoisseur held the drawing a little to the side, his own head inclined slightly toward one shoulder.

"Well, this is a surprise! Just look at that!" he chirped in amazement. "He's very bright to have caught the likeness so daringly! Upon my honour, it's a splendid piece of work! And you know there's something quite remarkable about it . . . When I was a boy of no more than seven, Repin, Ilya Yefimovich, drew me, and afterwards, when I was a young man of about twenty, Serov, Valentin Alexandrovich, painted my portrait. And still later, about fifty years ago, when I was over thirty, Mikhail Alexandrovich Vrubel did a portrait of me. And you know, my dear, they all drew me in left profile. That seems to be the most usual angle, and easiest to draw or paint. And this young chap of yours has drawn my right side which is not convenient to draw. It's remarkable, upon my word it is! What confident lines!"

"Leonardo da Vinci drew right profiles, too," Kolya put in timidly.

"Did you hear that?" cried the old man rapturously. "'Leonardo da Vinci, too'! I'd like to give you a hug for that 'too.' Upon my honour! Will you give me the sketch as a keepsake?"

But here Grandmother protested.

"No, Voka! You shan't have it! Isn't it enough that you've got Vrubel, Repin and Serov?"

"It would be interesting to round them off with this one," said Uncle Voka.

In a short time he left, moving his shaggy lips and comically twitching the bushy eyebrows, as if he were winking at Kolya.

"Who is Uncle Voka?" asked Kolya when the visitor had left.

“Goodness, don’t you know? It’s Vsevolod Savvich Mamontov. You must have heard of Savva Mamontov? Well, this is his son. He works at the Abramtsevo Museum.”

Of course Kolya had heard of Savva Mamontov and had read a great deal about his opera company. Mamontov, he knew, had been a wealthy patron of the arts, a true patriot, who had helped many painters. He knew that Serov had intervened for Mamontov with the tsar when that wealthy man suffered a financial crisis. So the old man was actually Savva Mamontov’s son. There was Uncle Voka for you! And Kolya had thought nothing of taking out his pencil and sketching him in a few hasty strokes. The thought that he had unknowingly outlined the features which famous masters had reproduced, made Kolya perspire with embarrassment.

Kolya kept up his old friendship with Zhenya Striganov, although they were both too busy to meet as frequently and for such long periods as in the old days. At first Zhenya was a little jealous of Kolya’s new friends, especially of Vitya Volk, but he also had made new friends among the boys at the apprentice school and at the factory. Besides, Zhenya could see that his chum had remained the same old Kolya and was not putting on airs. He had been willing enough, for example, to make a fine poster for Zhenya with the words: “Learn to Speed Up the Machining of Parts.” Some time later, Zhenya, rather shy, and trying to conceal his pride, showed up one evening at the Dmitrievs’. He called to Kolya to come out on to the stair and showed him a copy of the factory’s news-sheet.

“Look,” he said, “they’ve got a picture of me here.”

In the paper was a picture of Zhenya with a caption which

read: "Yevgeni Striganov grades at apprentice school as high-speed turner." Zhenya was scarcely recognizable in the picture, but the lathe, he said, had come out very well, and that after all was the most important thing.

"I'm really not much good compared with some of the others." Zhenya sighed modestly and lost no time in supporting his words with figures. "There's a fellow working with steel who's brought his cutting record to one thousand two hundred metres per minute."

It was clear that Zhenya was making his way in the world. He had joined the Komsomol, and he borrowed books from Kolya, went to plays as well as to the cinema, and even attended public lectures at the Polytechnical Museum. After graduating from the apprentice school he planned to continue his studies and go on improving his skill. His flaming hair was now neatly cropped and his hands showed the effects of hard scrubbing. Even his freckles had grown faint for Zhenya spared no pains to remove them. To be sure, it was not so easy now to recognize in the well-knit, mild-mannered youth the dishevelled young scamp of yesterday with trousers and shoes bearing witness to his high spirits.

"I've become a high-speed turner as you see," he said, "and it has made me realize what a crime it is to waste one's time. I begin to count up all the things it's possible to do. I don't idle away my days as I used to, getting no satisfaction or beauty out of life. I want to make the most of my time."

The finals for the football championship of the U.S.S.R. cup were being played in Moscow. In recognition of his good work Zhenya was given two free tickets at the factory and offered one to Kolya.

In the overcrowded underground car, the boys were

squeezed and hustled until they found themselves in opposite corners. Now and then they would shout to each other over the heads of the people.

"Kolya, are you there?"

"Looks like it!"

"Alive and kicking?"

"I think so!"

"Bear up a little, won't be long now—we get off at the next stop but one."

Very soon the human stream that had carried the boys into the car and jammed them from all sides, swept them on to the platform and up the escalator. Somehow they managed to elbow their way through the underground exit and past the throng of football fans who besieged passengers with: "Got a ticket to spare?" Finally they got to their seats. There was drizzling rain, so that most of the people had umbrellas or newspaper covers over their heads. And the stadium with its oval-shaped terracing looked like a huge patch dotted with little white paper tents whose inhabitants peered out to watch the football.

The match was played by the Spartak and Torpedo teams. Kolya, because of his one-time school loyalties, felt bound to support Spartak, but Zhenya was a Torpedo fan. Right at the beginning of the match Kolya's attention was diverted from the field by an elderly spectator with a bulging briefcase. Apparently he was paying his first visit to the Moscow stadium, for he kept curiously glancing around. He carefully read his programme, now wet with rain, and asked the people near him whether there were well-known footballers playing that day; then he wanted to know the names of Moscow's best players. "Where's the radio commentator?" he demanded.

"I thought he'd be here with his microphone." When he was told that the commentator could not be heard at the stadium, he was quite disappointed.

All the same it was obvious that the man knew a great deal about football and was an enthusiast. No sooner had the game started than he began jumping up and down, shouting advice to the players and sometimes even cursing. On his head was a queer cocked hat made of newspaper. At the beginning of the game the man acted with some restraint. After yelling: "Watch where you're passing that ball, block-head!" he would glance round in an embarrassed way and try to look as if he had never said a word. But gradually he was carried away by the excitement of the game, and all round him people were expressing their sympathy, delight and indignation as loudly as he was.

Kolya was intrigued by the man's face beneath the paper hat, with horror, delight, fear, supplication, perplexity, sudden rage and other emotions flitting across it in turn. Concealing his pad under the flap of his coat and paying no attention to what went on in the field, he set about sketching the man, and it seemed to him that he had caught the various emotions he experienced. He saw the man spring to his feet, with eyes almost bulging out of their sockets, stand stock-still, then suddenly blink with satisfaction and relax with a loud whiff from his puffed-up cheeks.

The stadium was in an uproar and Kolya realized that a goal had been scored.

Judging by Zhenya's lack of enthusiasm—he did not applaud but pulled down his cap with its insignia of crossed hammers lower over his eyes—Kolya knew that the goal was for Spartak.

"Did Spartak score?" asked Kolya.

"Oh, what's the good of going with you to a game?" Zhenya was annoyed. "You've missed it all. The ticket's wasted on you."

"I looked away so that I wouldn't see your team disgrace itself," Kolya was quick to answer. "And look at what I've done. Recognize him?"

"You're lost, a lost man, I tell you!" sighed Zhenya.

Chapter 7

"OVERTURE"

"Is he aware himself of the talent growing in him?" Fyodor Nikolayevich asked his wife more than once.

Apparently he was, to some measure.

One day, when Kolya was busy with his homework, Natalia Nikolayevna spoke to her husband of an interesting offer they had had. They had been asked to paint decorative panels for the walls of a club, but in addition to ornamental scrolls and floral designs the panels were to show human figures.

"That's what I'm afraid of," said Kolya's father. "It's a long time since you and I drew figures—it may not be so easy."

Kolya walked softly up to their table. He looked steadily at them both and then lowered his eyelids.

"Take it, Dad—I'll help you," he said simply and quite casually.

He did not try to push the point and, without waiting for a reply took up his books and left the room.

This was at a happy moment of soaring self-confidence,

produced by an important success at school. Such moments would alternate with moods when Kolya felt utterly helpless. He would pour out his feelings to Katya.

"I'm doing so badly, Katya," he would say. "Nothing will ever come of me. I feel so unhappy!"

Katya would scold him slightly: "As soon as you shake off all this nonsense things will be all right again. Besides I know why you're feeling fed up. Do you want me to take a note for you?"

Kolya blushed furiously and shook his fist at her in pretended rage.

Fyodor Nikolayevich understood his son's moods. He tried in every way to encourage Kolya's confidence in himself, realizing how important it was for his further studies. Even the most gifted people go through difficult periods, periods of stagnation when they seem to mark time and make no progress. And they lose faith in their future.

At a family council, the Dmitrievs decided that the encouragement of some eminent authority would have a good effect on Kolya. After talking things over with Uncle Volodya and Grandmother, Dad told Kolya in the middle of January that they were going to see Pyotr Petrovich Konchalovsky, a well-known painter.

The visit was arranged for January 18th, and Kolya looked forward to meeting the painter whose vital, high-spirited works he had long admired. What luck!—Konchalovsky himself was going to see his works and pass judgement on them.

Neither at home nor at school did anyone know that beginning with New Year's Day, 1948, Kolya had been keeping a diary. He never showed it to anyone. The entry, dated January 18th, read:

"We climbed a steep staircase and looked for No. 40 in semi-darkness. I was getting nervous and Dad's hands were trembling. Terrible thoughts raced through my mind. I wondered how the painter would receive us, and would he receive us at all? It was impossible not to be nervous when you were going for the first time to see a great master. And what a master—Konchalovsky! At last we reached the door of his flat. In the dark we fumbled for a bell-button and, finding none, we knocked timidly. From behind the door came the sound of heavy, shuffling footsteps, making my heart sink into my boots. An impressive-looking man stood on the threshold, a stout good-humoured fellow of about sixty in a beret and enormous spectacles which gave his face a benign softened look. 'Hullo, hullo, you're a little early, but come right in and show me what you've brought,' he said kindly in a deep, rather gruff voice.

"It was clear that we had interrupted Pyotr Petrovich at his work. In the middle of his huge studio with its great window running the length of the wall, stood a big, cumbersome easel with a canvas stretched over it. Canvases, large and small, hung on the walls or stood against them. Except for two sofas for visitors like ourselves and for models, a large table, cluttered with paints, empty tubes and a great many brushes of all sizes, there was no furniture to speak of. A huge stool held the palette. And, God, what a palette. It was enormous, a palette that none but Konchalovsky could use. Pyotr Petrovich made us sit on the sofa and sat on it himself, making the bottom sag to the floor. Then he began looking through my work, and as I watched this rather comical, ungainly, lovable man I felt all my fears and my embarrassment vanish. Of course I was still nervous about what he would

think of my work, but it was not the same feeling I had when I was coming upstairs. Dad was quite at ease and kept probing P. P. with questions. At first Konchalovsky was not very chatty but gradually he warmed up to the subjects we discussed, giving so much advice and making so many valuable suggestions that I wondered where his former reserve had disappeared to. He criticized, praised and scolded. He praised the drawing, particularly the sketches. He ended by going over the pictures again and again and by saying I must go on studying, that the game's worth the candle. My greatest mistake, P. P. pointed out, was that I didn't study life attentively enough . . . He began showing us his best works—still lifes, pictures of lilacs, portraits. At first sight most of his canvases appear luscious, beautiful, and painted in an affectedly slipshod way. But in reality they are very true to life and show a deep sensitivity, things I had not noticed in his painting before. It was getting dark but we hated to leave. However it would have been impolite to stay much longer, and not wishing to tire Pyotr Petrovich we took our leave cordially. As we went down the dark steep stairs, I still couldn't believe that I had actually been to see Konchalovsky."

Braced by Konchalovsky's sparing but reassuring praise and his firm, well-directed advice, Kolya plunged into his work with renewed zeal. A week later he wrote in his diary:

"I went to the Vagankovo Cemetery with Yegor to do some sketching. We visited Surikov's grave. It was freezing cold."

From the rough sketches made at the cemetery he painted "Surikov's Grave," a big picture. He tried to convey the atmosphere of frost-bound stillness, in which his whole being

tingled as he stood by the unpretentious stone marking the grave of one of his favourite painters.

A short time afterwards, Uncle Lyova, who had become deeply attached to Kolya and was always eager to hear what progress he was making, kept his promise to take Kolya to an opera at the Bolshoi Theatre.

Kolya loved going to the theatre. It was not merely the theatre and the performance that he liked so much, but everything associated with a visit to the theatre. He liked the flurry and excitement of preparations and dressing, the smell of freshly-ironed clothes and shoe-polish, and when his mother sat in front of the mirror he liked to watch her transformation into a beautiful, sweet-scented lady; he longed to take her arm and lead her down the street, happy in the knowledge that the fine lady was his own mother for all the world to see. He enjoyed the jostling of impatient crowds in the cloak-room, the cold touch of the check handed to them by the dignified attendant. He liked scampering up the staircase and coming unexpectedly upon his reflection, hardly recognizable in the mirrors. Then they would stop to buy a programme in the gangway under the central box, on the very threshold of the great theatre, lit by thousands of lights and amurmur with thousands of voices. Settled in their seats, they would feel the mysterious whiff of air from behind the curtain, and look at the huge crystal chandelier which, seen through opera-glasses, seemed as if you could put out your hand and touch it. Then came the slow extinguishing of lights and the dying away of noise in the auditorium. And today he had once more experienced all this.

A few days after his visit to the theatre, Kolya made an entry in his diary:

"Friday, Jan. 30th

"I went to see the opera 'Dark Power' at the Bolshoi Theatre with Uncle Lyova. I didn't much care for it. Uncle's settings were very much better. Especially those for the third and fourth acts. During the intervals we went up to the top gallery and from its dizzy height I made some sketches. Then we had cream puffs. I think Uncle Lyova's a capital fellow. He's always jolly, never cross, and pays for our theatre tickets. What more could you want?

"After the theatre I said good-bye to Uncle Lyova. I rushed home to start a picture called 'The Theatre' as quickly as possible, while it was all fresh in my mind."

Kolya put several days' work into his picture. He made sketches for it in his exercise-books, in his drawing-pad and in the margins of his diary. It was finished at last and Kolya changed its name from "The Theatre" to "Overture." It showed the interior of the Bolshoi Theatre seen from about the tenth row of the stalls. Obviously the lights had just been extinguished but part of their brilliance seemed to linger in the chandelier and wall-brackets. Dark shadows slipped into the boxes. The gilded mouldings over the upper circles gave off a faint flickering glow. The footlights shed beams of light upwards over the heavy curtain, rippling along its border in faint undulations. And in the distance, against the line dividing the illumined stage from the invisible orchestra stand, the conductor stood for a moment motionless, his baton raised. The hall was tense with expectation of the first soft, resonant notes of the overture to be released at any moment by the quivering strings or the hollowly answering brass.

The whole picture hovered between light and semi-darkness, between complete silence and the first sounds which break it,

with the dividing line scarcely perceptible. It was filled with such suspense and such anticipation of something great, it breathed such delicious stillness while seeming to let loose the first sounds of music, that when Kolya showed it at home, everyone unwittingly began to speak in hushed tones.

Many who later saw the picture reacted in the same way. Even the most vociferous could not help lowering their voices and looking at the picture in a silence which harmonized with the atmosphere of perfect stillness, broken only by the first hint of music, which was so successfully conveyed by the young artist.

Good old Uncle Lyova, who thought he was in a way responsible for this little triumph, asked Kolya to let him have the picture for a day to show it to Uncle Volodya. Uncle Volodya, hard to please as ever, again shouted at all the relations, telling them they didn't understand anything and that he couldn't keep explaining things to them for ever.

"Do you know why he calls it 'Overture'? He wants to leave a good deal unsaid, a good deal to the spectator's imagination. The pleasure of anticipation is sometimes greater than its fulfilment. When you anticipate you are free to imagine what you please, but when the thing you anticipated comes about you are being *shown*."

Again and again he looked at the picture.

"Yes, it really is an overture. The curtain hasn't gone up—yet the orchestra has sounded the first note and we can only guess what is in store for us, what this young giant will show us after his overture."

Fyodor Nikolayevich, fearing that too much praise would go to Kolya's head, remarked slyly that Kolya's picture was reminiscent, in its details, of the picture on the lid of



Sheep

"Festival" cigarette-boxes. At first Kolya was deeply hurt but he soon got over it and wrote in his diary:

"The picture is finished. To my mind it's not bad. Mother likes it too. Dad says I've copied the idea from the lid of a cigarette-box, but I've never set eyes on the cigarette-box he mentions. I was hurt of course, but there is really nothing to be hurt about, so long as I know myself that I didn't copy anything. My conscience is quite clear, and that's all that matters . . ."

Kolya's mother, apparently the most observant critic of his picture, noticed that he had drawn himself and his sister among the audience in the stalls, and had taken great pains over his own and Katya's heads.

Kolya's work was shown to the well-known Leningrad artist, G. S. Vereisky, who, wishing to do something pleasant for the boy, and having heard that Serov was his favourite painter, presented him with an excellent collection in book form of all of Serov's drawings. On the fly-leaf Vereisky wrote: "To Kolya Dmitriev, future artist." Kolya was delighted with the book, but embarrassed by the inscription.

"Why did he do that? Now I can't show it to anyone, not even Vitya. How can I give anyone a book with 'future artist' written on it? What would people think of me?"

He hid the present and only looked at it when nobody was around.

In the meantime lessons went on as usual at school. They drew in the studios, sat in the class-rooms, had tests, paid visits to the Tretyakov Art Gallery. And arrangements were being made for a Surikov evening.

Kolya's progress at school was uneven. Sometimes he ranked among the top pupils in all subjects, but there were times

when he grew absent-minded, fell behind in his studies, yawned during lessons and longed for Saturday to come.

"Saturday!" he wrote in his diary on Saturday evening, the 31st of January. "What could be better than Saturday? You stroll lazily to school and tell yourself that on Saturday you can do anything you like (well, of course, not quite anything!). You can beat up Z. You can even stay away from the last lesson. If you like you needn't turn up at the gym, and you can use the whole three quarters of an hour to enjoy books on art in the library. All offences, big or small, are forgotten over the week-end, and you can turn up in the class on Monday as if nothing had happened. And from then on there's nothing for it but patience till Saturday comes again."

Everyone had been looking forward to the Surikov evening and there was great disappointment when it was put off from the 31st of January till the following Saturday. And when at last the day came, it did not bring the joy anticipated.

"Feb. 7th

"At last came the long-awaited day. Everyone was in high spirits, longing for lessons to be over and the evening to come! But all our hopes were dashed to pieces; first and second form pupils, the so-called kids, were not invited for lack of room in the hall. Too bad we're still 'kids,' even though we're in the second form."

But Kolya was not disheartened. To spite the seniors and take them down a peg, he decided there and then to arrange a "Surikov evening" at his own home. Vitya Volk, Yegor Chursin, Yulia Makovkina, Svetofora, all came, and Zhenya was invited, too. They stayed up late, reading aloud in turns from Yevdokimov's book on Surikov and looking through the coloured illustrations. The Kremlin clock struck the midnight

chimes but Kolya's ringing voice was still cutting through the quiet of the Dmitrievs' flat:

"Surikov's whole life was a dedication to the conceiving and painting of one picture after another. Work filled every minute of morning, evening, noon and night. Meals were snatched hastily. Only a few hours were of necessity given to sleep and there were brief meetings with friends. He read avidly in preparation for his pictures, took hurried walks along the streets and boulevards, also for the benefit of his art: to observe life and nature. The motive force of his personal life was unceasing artistic endeavour."

"Unceasing artistic endeavour," Kolya repeated the words with particular pleasure the next morning, the 8th of February, when, still sleepy but filled with eagerness, he went to visit a painter along with Uncle Voka, who now dropped in quite often to see how "our laddie" was doing.

Kolya knew that the painter he was going to visit with his companion was a very remarkable personality. Fame had not walked in through the door of his studio in a Moscow side-street, but had overtaken him and his comrades on the ice-bound northern route, crossing from the Eastern to the Western hemisphere, when with Gromov he had repeated the amazing achievement of Chkalov. They had outshone the great pilot and broken the world record for long-distance non-stop flights. During the war the painter, Andrei Yumashev, had served in the air force as a general on active duty. Now at last he was able to devote himself wholly to art, instead of painting only in his spare moments, as he had done formerly. The personality of Andrei Yumashev, bearing the title of Hero of the Soviet

Union, famous polar airman and at the same time a painter, had long fascinated Kolya. This was a man, he told himself, whose life was a combination of feats of courage and feats of beauty. Lucky man whose hands could wield a brush and pilot an aircraft. And, no doubt, his eye was equally at home reading the pictures of great masters or aeronautical charts.

Kolya wondered how the famous pilot, painter and general would talk to him. Most likely in abrupt, crisp sentences, military-fashion. He might say: "More confidence needed. Colour spotty. Main idea's lost sight of. Do that over again!" And Kolya would have to stand at attention and answer: "Quite right, colour spotty, main idea's lost sight of." Especially as it would all be very much to the point.

Uncle Voka and Kolya took the lift to the top floor of the big house where Yumashev had his studio. The painter himself, flaxen-haired and blue-eyed, opened the door to them. He wore a snow-white smock which did not conceal his fine figure. Slender, of military bearing, supple in his movements, he stood aside to let his visitors in. Kolya looked at him with unconcealed admiration. Everything about him gleamed with a peculiar kind of cleanliness—his suit, his fresh comely face, his even teeth showing between his well-shaped lips as they parted in a fleeting smile, and his blue eyes, which looked at once cordially and penetratingly at his visitors. "As if he were scanning the horizon," Kolya said to himself rapturously.

"Come in," said Yumashev. Inside his small studio he briefly motioned them to a neat sofa behind the door. Everything gleamed, the parquet floor beautifully polished, and not a speck of dust anywhere. "As spick and span as a draughtsman's office," Kolya concluded. An easel, draped in a sheet as white as the painter's smock, stood by the window. Beside it on a table a

small graceful model of a red-winged aeroplane hovered over a curved metal support. On the walls were a great many unframed pictures, mostly landscapes, flower-pieces and country sketches. Kolya was surprised by the sympathetic, almost loving and tender style of the painting.

And he was completely charmed by his host, moving gracefully and confidently about the little studio, which was so high above Moscow that nothing could be seen from its large window but the pale-blue February sky. There was no military air about him, no swagger. His gestures were controlled but quite unaffected, friendly rather than "flying," as Kolya had expected. The whole atmosphere of the studio made one feel at ease. It was not so much painting as aviation that Kolya wanted to hear about: first-hand particulars of the great flight across the North Pole to the American continent. But Andrei Yumashev, who had by now gone through the pictures Kolya brought, said thoughtfully: "You're very much in earnest about your work, aren't you?"

Uncle Voka twitched his bushy eyebrows in confirmation. Kolya stood up and held his breath, waiting to hear what Yumashev would say next.

"Yes," continued the painter, "there's a lot here that I like. But to my mind you sometimes trust too much to your subjective impressions and don't worry enough about the unity of your colour-scheme, about harmony. Do you remember what Fyodor Vasilyev says—'No individual colour should be screaming. All must be subordinated to a single purpose.'"

Kolya nodded. "It's quite right, I do lose track of my main purpose, my main task."

Kolya stood facing Yumashev, having instinctively drawn himself to attention. But the artist pushed him gently back on

to the sofa and went on talking about the good and bad aspects of his work.

He spoke with professional assurance and accuracy. Simply and clearly he pointed out the defects in Kolya's water-colours, and what he said was obviously the result of his own ponderings, warmed by a long-suppressed passion for art. His words had a kind of respect which called forth respect from others.

Soon Kolya completely forgot that the man who was speaking to him in such a friendly fashion was a general and a celebrated pilot.

He was all artist, speaking softly, admonishingly, like a more experienced older brother, who had discovered for himself that to win great victories in the air or on the ground you must forget your own self, you must rise above fears and admit of no limits, using all your faculties, powers and knowledge. As a pilot he had himself performed a heroic feat, winning glory for his native land; he had never wavered, never lost sight of the goal before him. Now it was the turn of this shy, fair-haired, blue-eyed boy to rise to great heights. And Yumashev felt that the boy, who had a clear view of the goal before him and was wielding his brush like a grown man, had all the makings of one certain to score victory.

Kolya wrote in his diary on the evening of February 8th:

"I went to Yumashev's studio with Uncle Voka. He received us kindly, looked through my work, gave me a good deal of advice, kindly advice, that I had not expected from him. Mostly he found fault with my use of colours (lack of consistent colour-scheme). I never had such advice before, not even from P. P. Konchalovsky. He loves art tremendously and understands it. Works in his studio from eleven a. m. to eleven

p. m. It's very clean there—everything looks new and snow-white. Altogether he seems a nice, simple sort of person. He told me I could come to see him now and then."

"Just think of it, Mummy! What a hard worker he is, painting from eleven in the morning till eleven at night!" Kolya kept harking back to his visit. "Unceasing artistic endeavour" were the words which seemed to describe Yumashev's work.

On monday morning Kolya and his schoolmates met as usual in Antonina Petrovna's class. And although they all aimed at "unceasing artistic endeavour" as the mainspring of their lives, the moment the bell sounded and lessons were over, they stampeded down the staircase, Kolya playing leapfrog over Vitya's back, Yegor tumbling over them, and all running helter-skelter into the street with yells of "come on boys!"—kicking lumps of ice over the frozen ground and shoving each other into heaps of snow. It was hard to believe that these romping lads, jumping over snow heaps and stirring up the street with their frolics, were capable of sitting still for as long as five minutes, let alone pondering the meaning of true beauty or trying earnestly to express it in their own work.

It would indeed have been hard to imagine that the red-cheeked lad with sports cap tilted on the back of his head, and blue eyes reflecting the azure of the February sky, was making such entries in a diary:

"Sunday, Feb. 15th

"I was at the Tretyakov Gallery in the morning and had another look at Vrubel, Serov and Surikov. Vitya's wrong. Serov's portraits are far more powerful than Repin's. Of course there are exceptions."

"Tuesday, Feb. 17th

"I ran straight from school to the Gogol Boulevard and made

a sketch of the monument* for my composition. Reading Vrubel."

"Wednesday, Feb. 18th

"Got 'good' for my essay on 'The Patriotism of Pilot Mersyev.'** Yelena Konstantinovna praised it. That means a lot, for she doesn't often praise our work."

"Sunday, March 7th

"We all feel that spring has come. At any rate everyone's in a springtime mood. Once you're out of doors you feel like staying out all the time and not going back home.

"The sky is a clear blue and the spring sun shines brightly.

"There isn't a single cloud in the sky, it's bluish-purple high up, and greenish-azure near the horizon.

"Everything seems to be draped in a purplish light-blue colour. Everything's blue: the gleaming roofs, the shining pavement, all the puddles reflect the blue of the sky. The air is amazingly transparent. The thaw has set in; everything murmurs and rustles in a great irrepressible stream. I feel so good.

"The sun, the spring sun, is so hot that almost all the snow has melted off the roofs. In places which get much sun the pavements are steaming with a blue vapour as they dry.

"Mamas and Nurses like to gather in these places. They rock their prams, sit on benches warmed by the spring sunshine and doze to the monotonous sound of falling drops.

"I went out painting with Vitya."

Kolya loved springtime in Moscow, particularly sunny days when the town was bathed in radiance, and pedestrians could see themselves reflected in every passing motorbus, in the

* Monument to N. V. Gogol, great Russian writer. — *Tr.*

** The hero of B. Polevoi's book "The Story of a Real Man." — *Tr.*

rain-washed shop windows, car windows, and in the very puddles. The air vibrated with refracted rays, the wrist-watches of passers-by glittered cheerfully in the sun, and even in the spectacles of a cross old man the sunbeams danced. The flower-stands, where all winter nothing but paper flowers had been sold, now sported mimosa with its fluffy yellow balls.

Kolya kept passing and repassing the old grounds of the Institute for the Deaf in the hope that he would come upon Kira. Then it would be real spring, with everything bursting into flower. But in the garden the trees were bare. The jackdaws made the bare boughs sway with their cries of: "Ki-ra! Ki-ra!" which cut deeply into Kolya's heart.

It was too late now to attempt to make friendly advances. His spirits were noticeably affected, and to make matters worse, things were not going well at school. Kolya made doleful entries in his diary:

"Thursday, March 18th

"The third quarter of the term is coming to an end. Today nobody did anything at the art lessons. Everybody is excited, talking, discussing what marks they will get. The class is buzzing like a hive. Antonina Petrovna knows she can't do anything about it. During the second lesson our drawings and paintings were handed out. At last I could see all my 'works' for the last two months in a bunch. A sad spectacle. Drawings worst of all. Vitya has done some good work this term and Yegor's isn't bad.

"I went to Arbat Street after school and there bought quite by chance a book by Surikov. The illustrations are fairly decent. It's a good buy, I think. Only five rubles, certainly worth it.

"I'm really getting terribly nervous about my drawing. A whole month gone by, if not more, and nothing to show for it.

The funny thing is I have not the slightest wish to draw. Whenever I sit down to it the pencil slips through my fingers. Dad says it's growing pains. I try to comfort myself by saying it'll soon pass."

"Friday, March 19th

"Painted a still life in class. At the third lesson Nina Pavlovna gave us an algebra test. Rather difficult. But strange as it may seem, I managed to do it well.

"Doing my French now. Test tomorrow. Weather bad again. Outside it's cold, misty. There's a blizzard. It's best to stay at home."

"Saturday, March 20th

"I asked Mother for some money—or I should say asked her to let me buy something at a second-hand bookshop. Just before it closed I got a small book on Rubens, very interesting."

"Sunday, March 21st

"Went to the Tretyakov Gallery directly it opened—at ten. Though it was early, the gallery was full of people.

"This time I made a point of taking a good look at the old masters. First of all I went over to Kiprensky and Borovikovsky. But strange to say Kiprensky's pictures didn't live up to my expectations at all this time. I used to like them much more. But Levitsky and Borovikovsky surpassed my expectations.

"I met Vitya in the same rooms of the gallery. What a funny chap! He simply can't get over the fact that I don't like Silvestr Shchedrin. My opinion of landscape is this—unlike portraits where a stiff academic style, the utmost degree of finish and detail, even naturalism, are all perfectly acceptable, landscape that is pedantic and all polished, as Shchedrin's is, seems utterly wrong. Of course in those days when the Academy had such strong influence, the school, and consequently the technique,

of landscape painters was rigid and pedantic and, in my opinion, partly naturalistic. Silvestr Shchedrin could not possibly have seen landscape as Korovin, Serov and Levitan did."

Here Kolya stopped, evidently feeling that he had gone too far. From the words "in those days" to the end of the entry everything was heavily inked out. And he added as an afterthought:

"What a fool I am! Oh, how clearly I realize my own insignificance at this moment! How little I know! And yet I take it upon myself to judge! I have the merest smattering of knowledge, picked up at random. And look at the problem I dare take up. No good, Kolya! Skimming the surface, that's what you're doing! You have no deep knowledge, no thorough knowledge. Bad, very bad!"

Chapter 8

LIGHTS AND HIGHLIGHTS OF EVERYDAY LIFE

Kolya went again to the theatre from time to time with Uncle Lyova and made over thirty sketches for "Chichikov Visiting Sobakevich," a picture which he conceived after seeing "Dead Souls" at the Moscow Art Theatre, with Uncle Volodya's settings. He had almost no trouble with Sobakevich but, no matter how hard he tried, he could not get Chichikov's head in the right position. He turned it this way and that way, but it was no use, and he kept rubbing out what he drew so that Gogol's sleek "hero," in frock-coat, magnificent tie and stand-up collar, remained headless.

Kolya also did another water-colour of the interior of the Bolshoi Theatre, showing the melting radiance of the bronze

candelabra, the crimson velvet of the boxes, the glitter of the gilded upper circles.

But now from splendour and finery he turned to the deeper side of life, to its hardships and labour, to the new beauty which ordinary working people were creating. He persuaded Zhenya to take him to his factory, and it was arranged for a group of students from the art school to visit the workshops.

Zhenya, very proud, met the students at the entrance and for some time walked along with Kolya, Vitya and the others while they made the rounds of the shops.

Last of all, they were taken to the shop where trade school apprentices worked. Just then Zhenya's shift was to take over. Absorbed, perhaps a little flustered, with a dignity far beyond his years, red-haired Zhenya—or rather, high-speed turner Yevgeny Striganov—walked up to his lathe. He buttoned up and smoothed his overalls, unhurriedly inspected the lathe and, with a single well-trained movement of one hand, fixed the part to the chuck, screwed up the cutter with his other hand and switched on the power.

The lathe hummed, the sound growing louder at every turn; the madly revolving part became one glittering cone; the pearly emulsion sputtered; the slender shavings gleamed from under the cutter.

The foreman, a middle-aged man, advanced towards the visitors and, bending to be heard above the din, shouted: "An artist in his own way, eh?"

On the following week Kolya showed Zhenya a big water-colour: "A Factory Yard." Zhenya was amazed at the faithfulness with which Kolya had conveyed the familiar atmosphere of the big yard at the works, showing the solid masonry of its walls, the many-paned windows, the deft movements of some



Cowherd

workers laying a new underground cable in the yard. While his picture "Overture" suggested silence and suspense, this drawing seemed to be ringing with the din and hum of the plant, with human voices and the clangour of stone and metal. Zhenya was able to point out only a single inaccuracy. He told Kolya that one of the workers was not holding the pick with which he was breaking up the asphalt in the professional way. Kolya knew that Zhenya could be trusted and so, without arguing the point, he corrected his error.

Next he wanted to make a picture of new Moscow in construction. It took him a long time to strike on the correct composition and find the best details. First he filled a large sheet of paper with sketches of motor cars, trolley-buses and pedestrians all sucked into the vortex of the traffic; he sketched in the scaffolding of the buildings and above them planes with red stars on their wings.

But he felt he was trying to crowd too much into the picture without conveying the soaring impression he had got when he walked along Moscow's newly laid districts rejoicing in the rising buildings, the red flags flying over the scaffolding, and the lacy intricacies of the cranes. It seemed to him that against its blue skies Moscow was sending up in contour and colour a new and wonderful salute as a tribute to its victories on the labour front. This was what Kolya failed to convey in any of his sketches.

As he pondered over this picture, racking his brains to find the most effective means of expressing the spirit of Moscow, Kolya read again and again what Surikov had written about the rules of composition.

"There is an iron, inexorable rule in composition, one which can be grasped only intuitively, but which is so fundamental

that an inch of canvas added or subtracted or the faintest spot of colour may change the whole composition. Time and again I had actually to sew bits of canvas on to my Boyarinya Morozova. I could not make the horse move . . .”

“What I need, perhaps, is not to sew a bit on but to cut some off,” thought Kolya and began cutting and refitting parts of his composition. He decided to do away with the whole bottom part of the picture, rubbing out streets, pedestrians and cars. All that remained was the top storeys of new buildings, roofs, scaffolding and cranes. Above these, against a deep blue sky, he painted two aeroplanes, their outspread wings gleaming in the sun. At last he had achieved what he wanted. Looking at the picture, you seemed to be standing with head thrown back and eyes on the sky, where sun-bathed, indefatigable Moscow was sending up its ever-rising buildings, with cranes shooting out in all directions.

When Professor Gaiburov returned from his expedition he showed Kolya his new collection, including some splendid specimens of chrysolite with their deep play of colour, a sceptre-shaped quartz of rare beauty, bits of tourmaline found in mica, and an alexandrite crystal impregnated with ore. The last named had the wonderful property of changing colour: you put it on the window and in the daylight it gleamed a delicate green but by the light of the lamp in the evening a deep crimson fire flamed in it.

Kolya was inspired and felt that he wanted to paint precious stones. About this time the professor gave him Bazhov's "The Malachite Casket" to read and showed him reproductions of Vasnetsov's symbolic picture "Three Princesses of the Under-

ground Kingdom"—the three princesses representing the three daughters of the Earth—Gold, Iron and Coal. The legends of the Urals about the Mistress of the Copper Mountain, the clever stone-cutters, the "spark" that makes for success in all undertakings, and the power of science by whose help man can grow an arm reaching far into the clouds, sank deeply into Kolya's mind along with what he had heard from the red-headed carpenter, Zhenya's father, of the great might that lay in a man's hands, hands that were now forging the happiness of his land. The gleaming lights deep in the crystals and the changing play of colour, as well as the fantastic shapes of the stones which the professor had shown to Kolya, were a living illustration to what he had read in Bazhov's stories which now possessed his imagination.

After numerous failures, resulting in heaps of discarded sketches, Kolya finally produced a composition in colour which he called "The Stone Flower" and dedicated it to Professor Gaiburov. There was no denying that in this picture a good deal could be traced to the painter Vrubel. But it all seemed very much in harmony with the subject. You could not help believing in the reality of Kolya's subterranean fairy kingdom, illumined from within by the hidden mysterious fire of scattered star-like gems which filled the picture with their joyous glitter.

When Kolya finally summoned up courage to show the picture to Professor Gaiburov, the professor was amazed at the precision of the young artist's eye and at his ability to reproduce faithfully the true shades of colour of the various minerals.

But now Kolya was being drawn more and more to portray the everyday life of simple, ordinary people.

And in every work, in every subject he turned to, he sought for the hidden beauty and meaning behind ordinary things.

Out of his window he drew the old wall of a house in the yard with its roof and little attic window.

To anyone in the yard it was just an old wall, in no way remarkable. The boys played near it, while the girls drew on it flowers with outspread petals or little horned imps. But Kolya, looking at it, thought of all the rays of sunrise and the changing shades of sunset that had played on it. Perhaps on this very wall one of the first leaflets of the Revolution had been put up. And here, perhaps, later appeared the proclamations and decrees of the newly-established Soviet republic. There were cracks that might have been caused by shell splinters or demolition bombs. The frosts of many long winters had split the plaster which in summer crumbled with the heat. Autumn rains had left yellow splotches.

Kolya painted a large water-colour "The Old Wall." And in looking at the picture it was easy enough to imagine the long life of this old Moscow wall, still standing, still intact, and all the hard times it had seen.

The picture was really a poem to the old wall, or rather a chronicle which Kolya read on its cracked, dilapidated surface.

Turgenev's "The Singers" was the subject of a picture which gave Kolya a great deal of trouble. It was intended for a Surikov Competition sponsored by the art school. In preparation for the picture Kolya even went to hear Zhuravlev, the well-known elocutionist, read Turgenev's story.

The story had long been one of Kolya's favourites and he knew it almost by heart. But Zhuravlev, in his stirring manner and with a voice full of suppressed emotion, reaching the very

heart of the listener, made Kolya see more clearly than ever the scene in the tavern of the little Russian village where a peasant sang, pouring forth his song from the very depths of his sincere, ardent Russian soul. It was as if Kolya heard for himself the song which rang, as Turgenev writes, "with genuine depth of passion, and youth, and sweetness, and a sort of fascinating, careless, pathetic melancholy." Now for the first time Kolya realized why Yakov the Turk, the peasant, won against the booth-keeper who also sang beautifully but "with a sort of go-ahead daring."

As soon as he came home from the reading, Kolya began working on the picture, giving himself up completely to his mood, just like Yakov in Turgenev's story.

But it was not easy to find the right pose for all the singers who took part in the contest described in the story. There were so many of them, the Wild Master, the Gabbler and the Blinkard, Nikolai Ivanovich, the tavern-keeper, and his wife, and the drab little muzhik, crouching in a corner—all had to be true to character, had to have their own place and pose in the picture.

After rereading the story several times, Kolya began working on Yakov the Turk, the central figure, first drawing a few sketches and then trying to paint him in water-colours. He first decided to portray Yakov's face in the style of Vrubel's "Swan-Queen." But this gave Yakov an unnatural and unpleasantly feminine look. Kolya continued his quest. Then it seemed to him that he had already hit on the correct Yakov, making him somehow resemble the refined Lensky. But then he saw that that wouldn't do either; for Yakov the Turk was a peasant, which meant that his features should be of the common folk.

Another difficulty was to make Yakov stand out as the principal figure in the picture and elevate him above his hearers. He achieved this by making Yakov taller than the other figures, by placing him in the centre and having everyone else in the picture look at him.

From Kolya's picture rose a rather gawky young giant, towering two heads above the others, and with a simple, beardless, open face, his hair tossed back from his high forehead. One of his big, toil-worn hands—a peasant's hands—clutched the lapel of his coat, revealing a broad heaving chest. He was completely carried away by the song, pouring his whole heart into it.

Turgenev scholars, such as Professor N. Brodsky, claimed afterwards that Kolya's picture ranked among the best illustrations to Turgenev's story "The Singers."

The spring examinations were approaching and Kolya knew that he must give serious attention to the general subjects. He went as usual to the Novodevichy Convent to sketch there, rummaged in second-hand bookshops for books on art, and was extremely delighted when he picked up in a shop a folding camp-stool which could be carried in his pocket, but he grew more and more uneasy about the coming examinations.

"Wednesday, April 7th

"Spring is at its height. The sun shines all day. It is wonderfully warm out. I feel grand—because of spring, despite the exams . . ."

"Saturday, April 10th

"I spent all evening over my lessons. I began working on the exam questions and have done three out of twenty-six."

"Thursday, April 29th

"There is a chance of going to the theatre. Uncle Lyova is arranging things as usual. I don't know yet which theatre it's going to be. All I know is that it's Ostrovsky's "The Forest," and that the settings are by my uncle. There's to be a Pioneer meeting at school. Shall I miss it? I'll go to the theatre whatever happens."

And to the theatre they went. Uncle Lyova took Kolya to a dress rehearsal of "The Forest" at the Art Theatre.

Cautiously, Uncle Lyova watched Kolya's face during the play. The boy's eyes narrowed with amusement, he parted his lips childishly and moved his head from side to side. These were indications that Kolya approved of Uncle Volodya's settings. And they really were good, especially Gurmyzhskaya's private apartment, where every detail showed deep thought and inspiration, was in perfect harmony with the style of the period and proclaimed the artist's personal attitude to the play.

Uncle Volodya came up to them during the interval. He had just returned from a visit to Leningrad and, although tired, was his usual cheerful, lively self. He smiled at Kolya and affectionately shook hands with him. Kolya longed to tell him how he admired the settings, but before he could say anything Uncle Volodya was called away. After the play Kolya clapped long and eagerly for his uncle to come out and take a bow.

A few days later, on the 5th of May, Kolya made the last entry in his diary to which he never turned again.

"May 5th (1948)

"Uncle Volodya died suddenly at 9 a. m.

"I saw him last on April 29th at a dress rehearsal of "The Forest" at the Art Theatre. He was as jolly as usual, came up to Uncle Lyova, talked about the play, shook hands and spoke to me. That was all . . .

"After the play was over the theatre grew empty. We were the last to leave. I remembered I hadn't thanked Uncle Volodya or said good-bye to him. I felt ashamed. But I hadn't the courage to go back and thank him . . . Then I happened to turn to the stage. And there was Uncle Volodya, standing alone and looking towards us.

"Who could have thought then that in a week's time he would die?

"On the night of May 4th he came home feeling as well as usual. He had an attack during the night, and then another. A doctor was sent for but it was too late. At nine Uncle Volodya was no more.

"It seemed to me that Dad felt it more keenly than anyone."

Kolya walked behind his uncle's coffin to the cemetery at the Novodevichy Convent, where he had so often gone sketching of late. Unable to restrain himself, he wept bitterly in public for the first time in his life. The next day he went back to the cemetery and made a sketch of the fresh mound on the back of a book he had in his pocket. Uncle Lyova found him there chilled by the cold wind. He came silently up to the boy and put his arms round him. For some time they stood side by side at Uncle Volodya's grave.

"In the last century there were two painters named Dmitriev," Uncle Lyova said softly. "One was called the Caucasian Dmitriev, the other the Orenburg Dmitriev. And



Boy in the Sun

now that Volodya is dead, there is no painter bearing our name. You are our only hope, Kolya."

Kolya was so shaken by the death of his uncle that he did not go to school for several days and never touched his pencil.

But the examinations were approaching and he overcame his gnawing pain. He knew that there would be a void in his life, never to be filled by anything, but he also knew that he must pull himself together. He resumed his studies.

The examinations came at last. When the exams are only approaching, time seems to fly, day swiftly following day, but once they begin the strain is so great that everything—the nervous waiting, the pitfalls—is forgotten the moment they are over.

After the last exam Kolya and Vitya were walking down Herzen Street in the highest spirits. Bunches of lilacs and peonies swayed here and there in the crowd.

"Vitya," said Kolya with a light in his eyes that boded no good. "Let's test our nerves and will-power one day. D'you know how wild boar hunters do it? I read about it in a book. They stand in the middle of a railway track staring straight at an approaching express. The express goes full speed, it roars, but the hunter does not budge. He must stand to the very last minute. And only those brave enough to do so are allowed to hunt."

They said good-bye to each other and Kolya went off home, little thinking that he would soon have to stand a test far more serious than any faced by wild boar hunters, for as he entered his own street he all but ran into Kira.

For some time neither of them could say anything, and

both seemed to have difficulty in breathing as if they had been running. At last Kolya was able to speak.

"Hullo, Kira!"

"Hullo, Kolya!"

"It's ages since I've seen you."

"It does seem ages."

"Well, how are you getting on?"

"Thanks, all right. And you?"

"It's hard to say . . ."

Their voices both sounded unnatural, low and suddenly husky. They spoke first in undertones, then loudly, as if they were a long way off from each other. Strangely enough, now that this accidental meeting brought them face to face, Kolya felt horrified as never before at the great gulf of silence that had separated them. He remembered the wonderful evening when shyly and with implicit faith in him Kira had been so sweet, so near, with only a handkerchief between her face and his.

He couldn't bear this foolish estrangement any longer, not for a single moment. His mind was made up.

"Kira, I've been wanting to see you for a long time. To tell the truth, I wanted it to happen just like this—to come across you by chance."

"So did I, Kolya."

"Our quarrel was such nonsense . . . Do you think you could forgive me? Are you still angry with me?"

"I stopped being angry with you a long time ago, Kolya."

"Did you?"

"Of course! Didn't Katya tell you? But you didn't want to make it up then. You wouldn't believe we could ever be friends again."

"I suppose we could be friends, but not the way we were . . ."

"Let's not think of what has been, but of what will be," said Kira, giving him her hand.

Kolya squeezed it almost convulsively and said: "Katya and I are leaving for Repinka tomorrow. We're going to Nyusha's. You must remember her, she helped Mother with the housework during the war. I'll be sketching there a good deal of the time."

"Tomorrow?" Kira repeated, disappointed.

"Yes, I'm afraid so. Aunt Tanya's going there, and she's taking us with her. Kira, I've missed you so much!"

"I've missed you, too, Kolya."

He saw her home.

"We're friends again, aren't we?" asked Kolya.

"I told you we were," she answered.

"Friends like anybody else, or more than friends?" he asked.

"That remains to be seen . . ." she said mysteriously and went into the house.

That day, when Kolya went to say good night to his mother, with whom he shared all his joys and sorrows, he said: "Mum, darling, I . . . er . . . I ran into Kira and we've made it up . . . We're friends again."

"I'm glad," said Natalia Nikolayevna. "Do you think I didn't see how much upset you were, you silly boy! But I decided not to interfere. Let him work it out for himself, I thought."

"Oh, Mum!" Kolya said with a sigh. "I'm ready to confess how much the whole stupid business affected me. I felt as if something had died inside me. Really, I did! I felt empty, just like Uncle Volodya's room after they carried his body out

of it, with faded flowers lying about, and the floor soiled by strangers' boots . . . And now I'm happy! I think she understands. We decided not to write to each other. It would be hard to write after this break. I'll try to do some good work at Repinka, and when I come back everything will be all right between us again—I'm certain of that. And wait till you see how hard I'm going to work. I've learned a thing or two, and I'm strong all right—feel my muscles!"

Rolling up his sleeve, he bent his arm and stiffened the muscles, so that his mother could feel their resilient play beneath the smooth sun-tanned skin.

"He's grown, all right!" his mother thought as she looked at him. "He's quite a big lad. And yet in so many ways he's still a silly little boy."

Chapter 9

SUMMER IN REPINKA

To reach Repinka they had to get off at a junction called Sonkovo, change to another train which took them to a little station and from there ride a short distance in a farm-cart.

At the little station Kolya and Katya were met by Nyusha.

"Oh my, look at Kolya! I wouldn't have known him—he's turned into quite a young man!" Nyusha kept exclaiming. "And Katya! Katya's a real princess. So here you are, my sweet little birdies!"

After saying good-bye to Aunt Tanya, who was to go on in the train, they put their luggage on the cart, heaped up the straw to make comfortable seats, jumped in and set out for the village.

With their legs dangling over the edge of the cart, and their bodies being jolted so violently that they felt quite shaken up inside, Kolya and Katya, continually interrupting each other, told her all the news. Zhenya was really making his way in the world, and his father had learned to work with his left hand and was the instructor of a carpenters' team working on a big construction job. Mother was well, they told her, but Dad was again having trouble with his eyes—that was why he had not been able to come with them. And Vaksa, the cat, had grown old and lazy, and wouldn't catch mice any more.

All the way Kolya kept feeling for the small case and folder which held his painting kit; he also patted the pocket containing his collapsible camp-stool.

When they reached Repinka and the cart drove into Nyusha's yard, old Yefim Danilovich Razumeyev came out to meet them. His hair was quite white, but he held himself erect.

"Here we are, Grandad! Just look who's come!" cried Nyusha, jumping off the cart.

Effortlessly the old man lifted Katya from the cart and turned to do the same with Kolya. But Kolya, of course, would not stand for anything of the kind and promptly jumped off the cart.

"Welcome, my dear young man! Good afternoon, my dear young lady!" the old man said in a loud sing-song voice.

His greeting sounded so pompous that at first Kolya and Katya looked around to see whom he could be talking to. Then they realized with bashful pride that it was them he meant.

Indoors it seemed rather dark after the brilliant sunlight

outside. The shutters were closed to keep the rooms cool, and the house smelt of freshly washed floors and of hay.

Kolya had planned to go out at once to look at the scenery. While they were unpacking and having a wash, news of their arrival had spread through Repinka. The village boys who had come to do a bit of scouting gathered at the gate and beneath the windows. Soon everyone in Repinka knew that two city children had come to spend the summer with the Razumeyevs, and the boy wore shorts and had a wrist-watch, and the girl had a long stick with a kind of net at the top for catching butterflies and beetles. When Kolya went out he saw a group of children eyeing him curiously from the other side of the street. The girls, whispering and hanging on to each other some distance away, stared at Katya, who had come out behind her brother.

Suddenly a bicycle horn sounded shrilly and a young cyclist came speeding down the dusty road. He was a barefooted lad of about thirteen and he sat astride the bicycle frame, shifting his weight first to one side and then to the other, pressing hard on the pedals with his dust-covered feet, and sounding the horn all the time. Speeding past Kolya and Katya, he turned right round and came back, this time with his hands off the handle-bar. A minute later he appeared again, balancing his whole weight on one foot. Next he raced past with his belly on the saddle seat, while he steered with one hand and worked the pedal with the other. As he performed one stunt after another, the village youngsters looked triumphantly at Kolya and Katya to see if they were impressed.

Noticing Kolya's indifference, the cyclist began to ride at full speed straight at the Moscow boy. Katya squealed and

jumped out of the way, but Kolya remained where he was. Not for nothing had he been testing his nerves and will-power, and the cyclist was forced to stop with such a jerk that his rear wheel crunched in the sand.

"We've got people staying for the summer too, they're from Leningrad," he said, jumping off the bicycle. "There's the house, the third down the street. They've got a gramophone," he added to keep Kolya from feeling too proud about his wrist-watch. "Are you going to stay here long? What's your name? Mine's Syomka."

"Kolya."

"Want a ride?" he asked, pushing the bicycle at Kolya.

Kolya, who could not cycle, did not feel like admitting it in front of the village boys at his first meeting with them.

"Thanks, but I'm tired after the journey," he said evasively. "D'you think there are no bikes in Moscow?"

"Of course, you've got plenty there," said Syomka. "I bet in Moscow they don't walk at all but ride all the time! . . . Dad brought the cycle for me. He works in Leningrad, at the Kirov plant. What about my giving her a ride?" he asked, pointing to Katya. "Is that your sister? What's her name? . . . Katya? Katya, want me to give you a ride? Round the corner and back, all right?"

Kolya gave her a look which said she better stand on her dignity as a Moscow girl. But stubborn Figgimigigit walked boldly up to Syomka.

"Where do I sit?" she asked.

Kolya walked away to show that he had washed his hands of the whole matter. But simple-hearted little Katya, to the envy of the village girls, scrambled up on the frame and sat with her legs dangling at one side. Syomka raced up and

down the street with her, took her to the high road, did some "zigzag stunts," as he called them, and was impressed by the coolness of the little Moscow girl, who never once squealed, but held on to the bicycle frame for all she was worth.

"That'll do, Katya," said Kolya, unable to contain himself any longer. "You've had a ride and that's enough. You'll fall and I'll have to answer for it."

Regretfully Katya got off the bicycle.

Dusk was falling, bringing with it the cracking of the cowherd's whip, and the patter of goats' hoofs, like the sound of drizzling rain; the goats were followed by placid cows, which seemed to be lowing to themselves as they went by—piebald, brown, horned and hornless. Behind the animals came the sun-tanned, blue-eyed cowherd lad, his teeth gleaming, the handle of a whip over his shoulder, and the lash trailing its enormous length in the dust. When he caught sight of the new boy at the gate of the Razumeyevs' house, the cowherd lad at once pulled out his referee's whistle and gave a long blast. The cows, answering the familiar signal, quickened their pace. Then, taking the whip from his shoulder, he lashed the air with it as if it were a sword, producing a sonorous crack and making the thong writhe like a snake in the dust behind him.

So far, things were not to Kolya's advantage. He could not cycle. It was clear that he could never make a whip crack so lustily, and the fact that a boy tending cows and goats had a referee's whistle was rather puzzling. Kolya, who thought he had arrived in a backwoods, found that he was among people who could show him a thing or two.

But in the evening he was able to appear in a more favourable light, for when it got quite dark, he went out into the

street with the little electric torch which had been given to him as a present by Senior Lieutenant Gorbach. Electric torches of this kind were used as traffic signals at the front lines. By pressing a button the glass slide could be made to move and the torch would shed green, white or red light in turn.

The youngsters in the street were quite overwhelmed. They surrounded Kolya, who sent the torch beam over them, changing the lights all the time.

Suddenly the red ray fell on a lad of about sixteen, dressed in city clothes. He walked up to Kolya, who changed the light, so that the lad looked bright green and, a minute later, white.

"Hullo! You're a new-comer, too," said the stranger, and by the silence which fell on the company Kolya guessed this must be the boy from Leningrad who, according to Syomka, the cyclist, had brought a gramophone with him.

He was a little taller than Kolya but the light was not sufficient to show his face. The torch beam falling on his feet showed sandals with wide, open-work toes. Kolya switched off the torch.

"That's an army torch the kind they use in tank units, isn't it?" the boy asked. "We had torches like that in Leningrad during the war. Are you from Moscow?" He was more sure of his ground now and had apparently decided that he and Kolya could be friends. "Have you brought anything to read? I'm bored to death."

"Only a few books," said Kolya. "*Les Miserables* and *David Copperfield*. And a few others..." As he usually did when speaking of what meant most to him, he lowered his voice. "Some of them are on art."

"I'm glad you've got Victor Hugo. I don't mind rereading him. But I must say it's terribly dull here!" The lad bent closer to Kolya. "All the girls are ninnies, and the boys are dolts. No

one to talk to. Let's be friends. My name's Misha Khrupov!"

"Mine's Kolya Dmitriev!"

"Come over to my place. I'm here with my people. We've got a gramophone—I'll put on some records."

But Kolya realized all at once that he was very tired, and promised to meet Misha the next day.

"All right!" said Misha. "You're staying with the Razumeyevs, aren't you? I'll drop in tomorrow morning."

Nyusha treated Kolya and Katya to new milk and chunks of rye bread, cut a very young prickly cucumber in half, sprinkled a little salt on it, and rubbed the halves against each other. It all tasted so good that Kolya could not remember ever having enjoyed a meal so much.

Exhausted as he was, Kolya could not get to sleep for a long time and lay tossing from side to side on the mattress which was stuffed with fragrant, rustling hay. It was hot and a stray mosquito hummed erratically sometimes quite near him and sometimes flying off, until at last its humming died away.

But when Misha called the next morning, he did not find Kolya at home. He had wakened very early, when old Yefim, coughing and grunting in the morning dampness, returned from night duty at the collective-farm vegetable plots. Taking some bread and an onion, his camp-stool, sketching-book and paints, Kolya, impatient to get started on his sketching, which after all was what had induced him to come to Repinka, had gone out, closing the wicket-gate softly behind him. The working day was beginning for everyone in the village. Horses were being harnessed, and the sound of hammering came from an old coach-house where farm implements were repaired. Then the football whistle with its three different notes was sounded and answered by the lowing of the cows in their respective

sheds. And Kolya liked to think that he, too, was not merely a city boy on holiday, but a worker, getting up at dawn with the rest.

Kolya found that Repinka was almost surrounded by a jade-green wall of forests, intersected here and there by glades. Bright green, rounded hillocks sloped gently to the river, beyond which lay vast fields. A faint morning breeze sent silky ripples over the young corn stretching to the horizon.

This landscape, varied and soothingly beautiful, made Kolya gasp with delight. He had no doubts that he could do some fine sketching here; that hollow, for instance, where the slopes descended so gently, and the outskirts of the village of Repinka, gilded by the morning sun, the solidly built cottages, the fields with corn ripening to a golden yellow and contrasting with the blue sky.

The morning silence was again broken by the shrill football whistle and the loud cracking of the whip. Kolya saw the cowherd boy driving his cows to the green pasture.

"Hey, city boy!" cried the cowherd. "What made *you* get up so early?"

Kolya, watching him drag his whip and stride through the dewy grass, thought he looked like a young cockerel.

"What's that?" he asked, coming up to Kolya and pointing to the camp-stool sticking out of his pocket.

Kolya pulled it out, unfolded it, put it down and sat on it.

"It's smart!" said the cowherd boy approvingly. "I could do with one like that myself. When I take the cows to the pasture I could be quite comfortable and dry sitting on it. Then, if I wanted to move, I'd just pick it up and put it in my pocket. What handy things people make! Let me sit on it for a while!"

Kolya rose and let him sit on the stool.

"That's a real good thing!" he said after twisting about on it one way and another. Then he added: "What do you need it for?"

"For work. I take it when I go out sketching and painting." Kolya glanced at the boy to see what effect his words had produced.

But out of the sunburned, weather-beaten, freckled face stared a pair of such frank, wide-open eyes, so eager to see and understand everything, that Kolya at once felt ashamed of his attempt to impress him.

"I've come here to do summer sketching," he hastened to explain. "At the school where I study, an art school, we're given tasks for the summer."

"Ah, you've come for practice! I see."

"Something like that. I walk about looking for beautiful views and then I draw them in my book."

"That means you're learning to be an artist," the cowherd boy said admiringly. "Well, I've had something to do with art too. I go in for character dancing—you should see me. I danced before the public in places like Sonkovo and even Bologoye. Our school dancing circle won third prize."

Quite unexpectedly he began to dance, squatting down and kicking with his bare heels. Then, feet in the air, he stood on his hands for a moment; back on his feet, he finished by spinning round and round on one heel with his arms flung out like wings, his body almost parallel with the ground.

"How did you like that? Artistic?" he asked when the performance was over.

"Splendid!" cried Kolya with perfect sincerity.

"There you are!" said the cowherd. "We're not so backward here as you might think. We keep our eyes open."



Old Man Yefim

Slinging the whip over one shoulder, he caught it behind his back and threw it over the other shoulder. As he did so Kolya noticed some deep scars on the boy's arm, a little above the elbow, where the sleeve was rolled up.

"How did you get those?" he asked.

"Oh, those. Through no fault of my own." The cowherd boy rolled the sleeve higher and lifted his elbow. "A big wolf did that to me."

Kolya stared at him in wide-eyed astonishment.

"Think I'm fooling you? Ask anyone you like in Repinka. It happened last year when I was driving the collective-farm cows to graze. It was in the autumn. Suddenly along came two big wolves. They made straight for one of the cows that was in calf. They sprang at her, tearing and pulling with all their might. That'll be the end of the cow, I thought. I grabbed my whip and lashed at them. One of them slunk away at once. I rushed at the other and began to shout—not because I was scared, but because I wanted to frighten the wolves and make people come to my help. Then the one that had slunk away came back and made for me. I lashed out at him with my whip. One of his legs got tangled in the thong for a moment—he got free and rushed away like mad. But the other one, an old one, bit me in the arm—up here. What I did was to push the handle of my whip between his teeth and hold it there so that he couldn't close his jaws. But he tore my padded jacket to pieces with his hind legs, and then he hurt my arm. His breath was foul and I felt I could hardly breathe. I nearly fainted. It was a good thing I shoved my whip down his throat—the wolf himself could hardly breathe.

"Then for a while I didn't seem to know what was happen-

ing. Suddenly I saw old man Razumeyev near me and Prokhor Yevseyevich, our collective-farm chairman, and other people crowding round and trying to help me to my feet. They had been carting hay somewhere not far away and they'd heard me shouting. They said I'd been struggling with the wolf over ten minutes. But the devil got clean away! The cow recovered and I got a reward from the kolkhoz—a serge suit. I'm the only one in our form at school who's got a suit like that."

"What's your name?" asked Kolya, who had been watching him with growing interest and could already see him on a page of his sketching-pad.

"Vasya Pigusev."

"Would you mind standing just as you are for a bit? I want to draw you."

"What for? What is there about me that you want to draw?"

"I must draw you!" cried Kolya excitedly. "And I can draw animals a little now—I practised at the Zoo. When I get back to Moscow I'll paint a picture and call it 'The Cowherd's Brave Deed.' It'll be jolly interesting."

"Call it a brave deed, if you like," said the cowherd. "But put off the drawing business till tomorrow so that I can put on my new suit. Then you can draw me. It would be a disgrace to draw me in what I'm wearing now."

"What do I want with your new suit? You were wearing a padded jacket then, weren't you?"

"Yes, and a cap with ear-flaps," Vasya replied. "But let me put my boots on, for I hadn't bare feet at the time. Let's have everything just as it was."

It was difficult to draw the boy, for every now and then he would rush away shouting: "Hi, you! Go back, there!" and drive some stray cow back to the woods. Kolya would put down

his sketching-pad and dash off to help; then they would both resume their places and Kolya would continue drawing. Soon it was finished.

Kolya returned home hungry and a little tired, but immensely pleased with himself. He decided to make a few more sketches of Vasya, and paint a picture of him when he got back to Moscow. He certainly had plenty of guts for such an ordinary-looking lad. Kolya concluded that everywhere there were interesting people he wanted to paint.

Never before had he felt such a responsibility as he did now for every line he drew, every brushload of paint he put on paper. He had to get on without Dad or Mother to advise him, without Antonina Petrovna who could always make such helpful suggestions.

After dinner Misha Khrupov called and the two boys went for a stroll. Misha, who had been in Repinka for over a week, was able to point out many beautiful places on its outskirts. He had taken his fishing tackle along and they tried to catch fish. Kolya had no luck, but every time Misha pulled at his rod and drew it up a fish gleamed in the sunlight and was laid on the grass. Although Misha kept telling Kolya he didn't know how to fish, Kolya was irritated and suspected Misha of not playing fair.

"I'm fed up with this," said Kolya. "It's too dull. Anyway it's queer that you've caught a whole lot—and I've got only one . . . There, I knew that would happen, my one and only fish has got off the hook."

"You're a bit suspicious, are you?" said Misha with a sarcastic drawl.

"Suspensions flutter in our thoughts like bats—I think Francis Bacon said something like that," replied Kolya remembering what he had once read and trying to impress Misha.

The Leningrad boy looked at him in surprise. He was finding it hard to make up his mind about Kolya who, although he was not in the least conceited, had something about him that commanded respect and stopped you from showing off too much in his presence.

It had begun to rain. They waited for it to stop, taking cover in a barn, and then turned back to the village. But towards evening they met again and wandered over the hills round Repinka. The clouds drifting westward turned a flaming orange in the glow of the sunset and the entire sky was set alight as though caught in a magic blaze; there was something artificial about the whole scene.

"They've gorgeous sunsets here!" said Misha admiringly. "That one would make a fine picture."

Kolya screwed up his eyes slightly and bent his head first to one side and then to the other.

"I don't think it would," he said. "It's too flashy for my taste. It's somehow too decorative—showy and screaming. I can't bear that kind of thing."

"Wait a minute—what about those clouds over there? Aren't they lovely?" Misha refused to give in.

"Taken by themselves, they're not bad. Particularly the cumuli. Fyodor Vasilyev could paint them well. But those curly ones are too red."

"Well, I don't know. It seems a grand sky to me."

"Levitan, Korovin and Serov, when they painted nature, never went in for effects. In their landscapes nature lives but does not obtrude. It delights quietly in its own beauty."

"I don't understand you. Look at these colours. They're not invented—they're the true colours of nature."

"Chistyakov said that 'everything has its time and place. Even truth is a fool, if it is out of place.'"

"You and your Chistyakov seem to have a peculiar kind of reasoning. What do you mean by 'out of place'? *You* didn't choose their colours for them."

"I've nothing against the colours. Let them burn in the sky as gaudily as they please. But I do have a say when it comes to choosing what I should draw or paint. Now the roofs of those barns over there are really lovely. I must remember the colour; it's a perfect violet."

Misha gazed at the barns in the distance and then looked at Kolya in a puzzled way.

"I don't see a bit of violet," he said. "All I see is that they're grey."

"They may look grey to you, but I'm quite positive about their being violet. And what colour do you think this bit of wood is?" Kolya asked, picking up a charred chip from a heap of ashes at a place where there was no grass growing.

"It's black, of course."

"Black, did you say? There are at least forty different tints here. There is a perfect leaden glint, and there are some warm brown hues. And here's a bit of charcoal with a blue tint, like a raven's wing. But of course the colour-scheme here must all be subdued, varied in shades but having a dominant tone."

"I see black and nothing else. Are your eyes different from other people's?" Misha asked dubiously. "Or does your mind work differently?"

"No," replied Kolya gravely, with no intention of making light of the matter. "The eye sees the colour and the mind

defines it. Vasilyev, the painter, used to say: 'Where I see the tone clearly, others see either nothing or merely a grey or black spot' . . . I feel the same way."

"You're trying to be smart. I bet you don't think the moon's beautiful. See, over there it's come out from the cu . . . cu . . ., what was the fancy name you called those clouds? Is it good enough to be painted as it is?"

Kolya considered the pale disc of the moon, half concealed by clouds, which had suddenly appeared in the evening sky.

"No, it isn't," he said after a pause. "I wouldn't paint it in its present position. It only spoils the light effect. And it's completely out of place in the sky now."

"That beats me!" cried Misha angrily. "I beg your pardon, but there's something out of place in your head!"

And he walked off, convinced that Kolya was either trying to show off or pulling his leg.

Dusk was gathering. The wall of forest seemed nearer and taller, the fir-tree tops scalloped against the pale green sky. In the meadows the grasshoppers hummed loudly. And soon the air was filled with a plaintive murmuring which seemed to be part of the darkness and could be heard everywhere.

An ugly night bird settled on the edge of the barn roof. It looked suspiciously at Kolya and then, flapping its wings and breaking the silence with its raucous cry, fluttered away.

Kolya went home.

In the morning Misha found him in the fields beyond the smithy.

The day was cloudy but Kolya had his camp-stool and was painting. By the barns at the threshing-floor, Repinka's young-

sters, craning their necks, stood watching from a respectful distance; they were beginning to think a lot of the new city boy. Misha walked carelessly up to where Kolya was sitting, but when he saw his work he was amazed; he knew now that Kolya had not been showing off the day before.

Out of a small square of paper pinned to the board which Kolya held in front of him stared a sad sky overcast with grey clouds. In the distance the trees drooped, wrapped in a twilight haze, and the heat and closeness of a heavy summer day seemed to pervade the picture. Only here and there in the rain-washed grass were gold little islands of sunlight which had managed in a few places to break through the mass of clouds.

There were no screaming colours, no flashiness in Kolya's picture. It was subdued in tone, showing nature in a shy, pensive mood, full of an inner loveliness. Misha looked at the view which Kolya, biting his lips, frowning, and muttering under his breath, was painting, and he realized that only now did he fully appreciate its beauty. Misha did not dare to break the silence which had cast its spell even over the country children, sitting some distance away, and, without saying anything, he very quietly dropped on to the grass beside Kolya. When Kolya noticed him, he made as if to cover the drawing, but then smiled apologetically and wiped the perspiration from his forehead with the back of the hand which held his brush.

"This is the kind of day I like," he said as though trying to justify himself. "I've been trying to paint the dim light. But I'm afraid I haven't succeeded . . ."

Misha took another look at Kolya's picture, but could say nothing.

BRUSHES AND ARROWS

*"For the pen I can find a remedy,"
said the yeoman; and, bending his bow,
he aimed his shaft at a wild goose,
which was soaring over their heads.*

WALTER SCOTT, "IVANHOE"

Kolya's fame spread in Repinka as the boy from Moscow who could draw any view he liked, had already done one picture of Vasya, the cowherd boy, and had promised to do another one to give to Vasya as a keepsake. The children followed Kolya about, almost fighting with one another for the privilege of carrying his paint-box, water-jar or camp-stool. While he painted they sat patiently a little way off, waiting for the time when they would be allowed to come up and see what he had done. Whenever grown-ups approached the place where Kolya had settled to paint, the children would wave furiously at them as if to say: "Go away—can't you see a person is busy." And the villagers were loud in their praise of the fair-haired lad who painted industriously, crouching on his three-legged stool by the fringe of the forest, on the river bank, or at the barns by the threshing-floor.

"That lad won't waste his life away. He doesn't eat his parents' bread in idleness. What a joy he must be to his mother and father!"

Yet hardly anyone in Repinka ever saw Kolya's complete sketches. If anyone came near, he would stop working and wait patiently for the intruder to go away. He always tried to paint where he was not likely to be disturbed, but could sit enjoying the solitude of the peaceful, fragrant surroundings of Repinka.

His finished work he carefully stowed away under the hay mattress.

He completely won the hearts of Repinka's children when he carved boats for them from bark and made a few galleys with sharpened matches for oars. And after he taught them to make bows and arrows, their admiration turned to worship.

He had learned the art of making bows and stretching the bow-strings till they were taut in the Pioneer camp. And now all Repinka's youngsters brought him twigs to be sharpened into bows with a proper bend to them and to have the bow-strings attached in the right way.

They learned, too, from Kolya about the world's great legendary archers. He told them about Ilya Muromets, the Russian hero whose shaft killed the Robber Nightingale, about Ivanushka in the Russian fairy-tale who shot his arrow into the swamp at the Frog Queen, about Ulysses, Robin Hood, and William Tell.

"Can't you find anything better to do than waste your time on these kids?" Misha asked him in surprise.

"I don't mind playing a bit myself," said Kolya by way of an explanation. "You see, I feel as if I hadn't played enough when I was a kid. The war is to blame for that—although we had great fun playing games in the yard."

Kolya arranged an archery-tournament in which many of the village boys took part. He designed brightly-coloured targets which, with Misha's help, he pinned to stakes along the pasture not far from the village. He spared no paint to make the archers' bows look as attractive as possible, and for the arrows the boys kept pottering about the hen-scoops, trying to pluck feathers from the hens' tails.

The tournament was held towards evening at the common

pasture and all the villagers gathered after their day's mowing to watch a spectacle which Repinka had never before witnessed.

Before the competition Kolya made his archers march in full array across the pasture with the bright-coloured bows in their left hands and quivers slung over their backs. Kolya, though he was not one of the competitors, opened the tournament. He cut a fine figure, as tense as his own bow-string, with the arc stretched far in front of him and his hand firm and steady. All the five arrows which twanged from his bow pierced the paper target on which he had reproduced from memory a cartoon by the artists Kukriniksi.

After Kolya came Syomka, the cyclist, who made a good showing, three of his five arrows hitting the mark. Misha did equally well. But Vasya Pigusev, who hit the target with four of his arrows, carried the day. And no wonder, for Kolya had made him the best bow, bending it and testing it for a long time and, needless to say, painting it beautifully.

Vasya, the cowherd boy, had got this fine bow for having let Kolya into the secret of coiling a whip in such a way that it would crack more loudly than a gun-shot, without getting uncoiled; he was the only one in Repinka who knew how to do this. Patience and practice were required, and, as Vasya assured Kolya, it was all a matter of coiling the whip in the proper manner, letting it get gradually thinner at the end. Also, to make the crack louder, strands of horse-hair were plaited into the tail of the whip. Kolya learned to perfection all that Vasya taught him.

When the tournament was over and it was quite dark, Kolya, to the delight of the villagers, improvised a victory salute. He had got from Misha Khrupov a roll of old film and cut it into long narrow strips which he attached to the boys' arrow-tips.

Then, along with Misha, Syomka, and Vasya, he lighted the ends of the film and shot the arrows into the sky. Tongues of flame, fizzing, whirling and fluttering, soared like rockets over Repinka.

"What a bright lad!" said the collective farmers as they called their children and made for home. "Everybody likes him."

"And look at the change that's come over our own lads since he's come. He reads books to them and draws pictures for them."

"He's shown us a real salute, the kind they have in Moscow. A smart lad. It's nice to feel there are such lads in the world to make life more interesting for everybody."

Kolya would spend all day on the outskirts of the village, in the woods or on the river bank. He would come to Nyusha only to snatch a hasty meal, and would at once dash off to sketch at the special spot he had selected that morning or the day before.

"Kolya, you mustn't work so hard!" Nyusha kept admonishing him. "Why don't you rest a bit after your sketching—run about a little? Besides, you're offending the girls here, the way you keep to yourself."

Kolya was never home before evening. But when he came, the house filled with young people. Misha Khrupov usually brought the gramophone and the boys and girls listened to the music or danced.

Kolya's young admirers showered gifts upon Katya, such as baskets of berries and mushrooms, which Katya would on no account accept. But Nyusha who had no such scruples took them gladly on the principle that a basket of mushrooms or

blackberries would never go wrong in the kitchen. The elder girls tried to worm their way into Katya's confidence, eager to find out why Kolya never danced with any of them. But Katya was determined not to betray Kolya's secret, and with what she imagined were evasive answers tried to lead the girls off the track.

"Firstly, he doesn't care for dancing," she said, "secondly—well, he's got someone on his mind."

"Oh, Katya, please tell us who it is!"

"Not on your life!"

"I bet he carries a photo of her. Please, let's have a peep at it."

"There's no photo, I tell you," replied Katya. "He once made a picture of her, but then he got angry and tore it to pieces."

"So he's not as quiet as he looks."

"Not at all. You don't know him!"

Scores of new ideas for pictures crowded into Kolya's head. Everywhere his eye caught a part of that great throbbing life to which art must do justice. He drew zealously the village Pioneers carrying buckets of water from the well to the collective farmers out in the fields, made sketches of the harvesting and a big pencil drawing of old Yefim Razumeyev.

Kolya and old Yefim had become good friends. The old man had a pleasing sense of humour and a habit of making up puns which had a certain puckishness. When he was not joking or making fun, he liked to listen to Kolya's stories about Moscow, the Red Square, the salutes fired in Moscow, the Agricultural Exhibition, which Kolya had visited before the war, the Lenin Museum and the Tretyakov Art Gallery.

"The kind of painter who could paint a man's picture so that he looked handsome and twenty years younger—and then



Birch-Trees. *Water-colour*

pass on to the man himself the youth and strength he had shown in the picture, would be a painter after my own heart," said old man Yefim.

When the old man noticed that Kolya never showed his pictures to strangers, he shook a sunburned, crooked finger at him.

"Even God craving appreciation for his divine deeds created man to look upon them. Rocks and cattle he made dumb, but to man he gave the word so that he might sing praises to creation. But man, instead of singing God's praises, decided that he had a bone to pick with God and that things were not the way they should be, and then God turned against man."

"Do you believe in God?" Kolya asked interestedly but guardedly.

"Well, you see how matters stand—I used to believe in God, and it's hard to drop the habit. But believing in God will get you nowhere unless you believe in yourself—that's the main thing."

Old Yefim liked to discuss politics and took quite an interest in international affairs. Kolya would tell Misha about his discussions with the old man.

"What a quick brain he's got," Kolya said. "I could talk with him for hours and hours."

Kolya worked for a long time before he was able to show in his picture of Yefim the calm, unruffled wisdom that looked out from under his white brows with mischievous little wrinkles radiating in all directions.

"You've polished me up a bit in your picture," said the old man, looking approvingly at Kolya's drawing. "That means I'll have to live up to the picture, and get more workdays to my credit, so as not to disgrace myself."

Soon afterwards Kolya received from old Yefim an unexpected gift—a pair of bast sandals.

“I made these as a keepsake for you, my young artist, to let you know the kind of footwear we folks used to wear. I’m sure you’ve never seen the like of them. So take them and remember how our people fighting their way to a new life were shod.”

Kolya hung up the sandals on the wall and made a fine water-colour picture of them.

His drawings and water-colours were already too many for one folder to hold, and a second folder was now almost full. There seemed to be no limit to Kolya’s zeal for work that summer.

One day, when old Yefim was not feeling well and could not report for night duty at the vegetable plots, Nyusha went in his stead. To her surprise she found Kolya there.

“Are you waiting for somebody?” she asked.

“For you. I’m going to be here with you all night,” he declared. “You’re a woman and you might be afraid all alone in the field at night.”

“So, you’re the brave man that’s come to protect me! Better go home. Staying up all night isn’t as pleasant as you might think.”

But nothing could make Kolya change his mind and he stayed up all night with Nyusha guarding the farm’s vegetable plots. Nyusha let him have old Yefim’s scare-rattle made of a hollowed trowel against which a little wooden ball, suspended from a bit of string, clapped. He quickly learned to handle it and paced up and down the plots, swinging the rattle.

The collective-farm chairman, Prokhor Yevseyevich Kozlov, came to check on the night watchman. He followed the sound

of the rattle and was greatly surprised when he ran into Kolya in the darkness. Nyusha explained how he came to be there.

"Go on clapping till it gets light, and then off to bed, both of you," said the farm chairman. "You're a lad that's not slow on the job, I can see that. Now sit down for a while and tell me about things in Moscow. You're not chilled by any chance?"

The chairman made Kolya sit beside him on a mound, throwing his canvas cloak over the boy's shoulders. Kolya spoke to him about Moscow, as he did to old Yefim. He described Moscow's underground stations, and was even able to name the kinds of marble—which he knew from Professor Gaiburov—used in the facing of these veritable palaces. Nyusha, half-asleep, was clapping the rattle. The constellations stood out in the heavens and moved slowly. Kolya pointed out the Milky Way, Mars, Venus and other planets and stars.

"So you know something about that, too," said the chairman in surprise. After a pause he lit a cigarette and continued: "It would be a good thing if you came up here in a year or two from now, Kolya. By then we'll have got on our feet and built up the place. At present there is not much of interest for you to draw. A lot was destroyed during the war—there was fighting quite close by and we haven't yet repaired the damage. By then we'll have put up a new club-house and you can help us with the wall designs in the big hall. You could organize a young artists' circle for the children. They think a lot of you and they'll be keen to join. You can teach them to draw and paint."

"Teach them? I've got so much to learn myself before I can do that," Kolya said.

"You'll learn all there is to learn," the chairman broke in. "That's quite clear!"

He saw Kolya home himself and ordered him to bed.

Day followed day. Kolya worked tirelessly, painting landscapes, sketching groups of village children; but he was getting homesick and longed to be back in Moscow. Katya never stopped marvelling at the change that had come over Kolya in Repinka; for one thing he had become the most considerate of brothers. He designed styles for her doll's dresses, read books aloud to her, anxiously rubbed her feet when she got them wet in the rain. They now had a favourite bedtime game—guessing what their mother or father or Zhenya could be doing or talking about that very minute.

“And Kira?” Katya once put in cautiously.

“I don't know what *Kira* would say to you this minute,” Kolya looked sternly at her, “but *I'm* telling you to close your eyes and sleep.”

Later Kolya spent a long time drawing in his note-book tiny designs of crests. He remembered seeing in a book painter Tropinin's crest—a brush in chains. Kolya drew a small-sized palette with two brushes and an arrow slipped through the oval-shaped opening for the painter's thumb. And he saw for the first time the amazing resemblance between a palette and brushes and a pierced heart.

One day Misha Khrupov and Kolya scrambled up into a hayloft with the intention of waiting for Katya and the village girls to pass and giving them a scare. The air was fragrant and dusty from the hay, making the boys want to sneeze, but in case it might spoil their scheme they controlled themselves. In the dim light they saw a round sunbeam, misty with sparkling specks of dust, crawling indolently along the wall. Caterwauling came from somewhere near by. Misha began telling thrilling tales about highway robbers and about ghosts in flowing

white robes walking on stilts and holding hollowed pumpkins with lighted candles gleaming through eye-shaped openings. Then they began to ask each other riddles.

"Guess this one," said Misha. "Born on a marsh, thrice baptized, twice decorated, never vanquished."

Kolya gave up. The answer to the riddle was "Leningrad."

Leningrad had often been the subject of their conversations. And now Misha, who had a passion for machinery, began to talk about the powerful cranes he had seen in Leningrad's harbour, cranes which at one stroke could unload a locomotive from a ship and bring it down on to the pier. He also recalled the visit he had paid with his father, an engineer, to the Volkhov Power Station, and an outing to the Kirov Plant. Misha was so well versed in everything that had to do with machines that Kolya, although also interested in machinery and steam-ships, could not compare with him. However, when the conversation turned to Leningrad's museums, Kolya proved far better informed.

"Misha, I bet you anything you've got things mixed up," he said. "In the first place Leonardo da Vinci's pictures do not hang on a wall in the Hermitage Museum; they're on a special stand in the middle of one of the rooms. In the second place, Bryullov's 'The Last Day of Pompeii' isn't the biggest picture in the Russian Museum—it's Bruni's 'The Bronze Serpent.'"

"What makes you so sure of yourself? Have you been to Leningrad?" Misha asked in surprise.

"I've not been to Leningrad, but I've read so much about the city itself that I know by heart where all the pictures in Leningrad's museums are. I even know where all the monuments stand in the city, so I'm not likely to lose my way there."

"Well, I never!" Misha exclaimed.

"Each to his own subject," Kolya remarked. "I don't pretend to know more than you do about bridges and cranes, do I?"

They fell silent, yawning.

Unfortunately the girls did not turn up. Kolya and Misha were tired of lying in the prickly hay. Conversation lagged, words coming as slowly as the trickling of sap from a birch-tree.

"Why don't you go to dances?" Misha asked unexpectedly. "There are jolly girls here."

"Oh, I don't care much for that sort of thing," Kolya confessed. "And besides there's another reason. I'm not in the mood for it."

"And why's that?" Misha asked, his interest aroused.

And somehow Kolya, without really intending to do anything of the kind, told Misha about Kira and the quarrel they had had. True, he left a good deal unsaid and made it sound less serious than it really was. He kept back the fact, for example, that he had run into Kira just before he left for Repinka. But still he felt uneasy and annoyed with himself for having spoken at all.

Misha livened up and began giving Kolya advice on how best to act in such matters.

"You're a queer chap," he said. "If I were in your place now I would . . ."

But Kolya, without waiting to hear him finish the sentence, jumped down from the hayloft, shook the hay off his clothes and went into the yard.

If he could have a crest, he thought, he would choose a palette like a pierced heart with an arrow and brushes, brushes and an arrow.

Chapter 11

THE DAY WAS ONLY JUST BEGINNING

Preparations for a village holiday were under way in Repinka. Some of the villagers were busy brewing beer. They made a bonfire in a clearing in the woods, hurled some stones into the flames and when they were red-hot removed them with large iron tongs and flung them into a huge bin, covering it with sacking.

The village brewers at work, something he had never seen before, fascinated Kolya. Somehow the colossal bin, the red-hot stones sizzling as they sank into the liquid, the smoke and flames of the bonfire illuminating the faces of the men, were like some ancient magic rite.

Old Yefim, with much effort, pulled the plug out of the bin, and a rich brown liquid came spurting into a waiting tub. Then he drained some of the liquid with a scoop, blowing at it to cool it, tasted it, grunted with satisfaction, dried his beard and poured in a full cup for Kolya. Kolya gulped it down. The liquid was sweet, thick and sticky and seemed to Kolya extremely satisfying. He was offered a head of onion, a hunk of bread and another drink to wash it down.

The others had also had several drinks and grew quite jolly. They told Kolya he must not turn up his city nose at their home-brewed beer and persuaded him to have more of it. Nyusha had gone off, and Kolya, feeling there was no one to hold him back, had another drink of the beer.

A strange feeling came over him, not at all what he had expected. He felt no elation and no joy but a sense of the utter futility of things. A minute later he wanted above all to lie down and he made for home. On the way his mood changed

to one of carefree gaiety and he decided he didn't care two straws for anything. Nothing really mattered and the world seemed a wonderful place. The movements of his limbs, particularly his legs, were now completely beyond his control. Only his tongue, though he felt a queer numbness in it, kept babbling all sorts of nonsense. When Kolya finally reached the porch of the cottage, everything swam before his eyes, the ground and the roof swayed, and the trees at the gate began to reel and whirl at a dizzy speed. "What beastly stuff," Kolya mumbled to himself in a plaintive, puzzled way. "Why did this have to happen?" he asked himself. "I know I'm good, and so are Dad and Mum and Figgimigigit. They all love me and so does Kira. And I l-love them and that's that."

When Nyusha came home she found Kolya sound asleep on the doorstep. She helped him to get to his bed.

The next day he woke with a splitting headache, and it was very unpleasant—vague though it all was in his mind—to recall what had happened the day before. There was no pleasure in what he had done; he experienced nothing like the feeling of deep, sweeping joy which possessed him in those rare moments of great success in his work, when the image beneath his hand began to live and breathe. He swore he would never take another drop of the beastly stuff. And he tried to think of an appropriate quotation to ease his mind but could not. Then he remembered a familiar one from Cervantes about what one must go through to be a real man; but there was not a word about drinking.

Katya was with Kolya all the time he felt unwell, looking after him as best she could, and tactfully asking no questions, although obviously she knew from Nyusha and the village girls what had happened. With an air of efficiency she rummaged in

the medicine-kit which their mother had given them when they were leaving. In the kit was a list of the medicines it contained and to each medicine was attached a note saying when, in what circumstances, and in what doses it should be taken. But unluckily the labels had come off and all the medicines now lay in confusion. There was no way for Katya to know what powder or pill should be administered in the present case. She tasted all the medicines in turn, licking the powders with her tongue, putting the pills between her teeth, wrinkling her nose, sniffing and spitting, ready to make any sacrifice for her brother's sake.

After swallowing a great quantity of the drugs Katya gave him, Kolya, touched by his sister's solicitude, felt he wanted to please her in some way. He got out of bed, stood his mattress up against the wall, took some of the best water-colours he had painted lately and pinned them to mattress as he would to a stand. Then he called:

"Katya, would you like to take a look at these? If you're interested, of course. Only please close the door, for you know I don't like people coming to look at my work."

She could hardly believe her ears. It was so difficult to make Kolya show his work to anyone, and now he wanted, was even eager, to show it to her.

She ran up to the mattress and fairly screamed with delight, not knowing which picture to look at first: rye, houses, trees, floating clouds, sun-gilded hill-tops, the cool tranquillity of the Mologa River. All the beauty she had admired and enjoyed so much during the summer months was reproduced in Kolya's pictures, and seemed in them even more beautiful than in real life.

"Well, what do you think of these?" asked Kolya with affected indifference but glancing nervously at his sister.

He had not shown these pictures to anyone and he wondered what his critical sister would say. But she was silent. Stunned by what she saw, she gripped Kolya by the elbow but, fearing he would laugh at her impulsiveness, withdrew her hand at once.

"Oh, Kolya," she said, looking devotedly into his face, "you've never done anything as good before."

"Did you think I've been wasting my time here?"

Kolya caught Katya in his arms and began whirling round the room with her.

She kicked, squealed rapturously and pounded her brother's back with her fists. In the excitement they knocked against the mattress, upsetting it so that it fell on top of them as they tumbled on to the floor with the delicate green, blue, and golden water-colours fluttering and dropping over their heads.

It took Katya a long time to gather up, smooth and put away Kolya's drawings carefully. She was very proud of the trust her brother had shown in her, but as his headache had returned after the excitement, she insisted that he lie down quietly and take some medicine.

And there was nothing Kolya could do but swallow, nearly choking over it, some brownish powder which smelt of aniseed and which he felt was turning his stomach.

That evening, instead of going out, Kolya stayed at home reading "Les Miserables," copying into an exercise-book, as usual, anything he thought particularly interesting.

He copied the passage in which Victor Hugo describes brave little Gavroche rushing from the barricade to collect cartridges for his older comrades who were fighting for the revolution.

With bullets whistling overhead, he went about his business humming a gay song. He did not finish the song, for a bullet from the enemy barricade hit his head. He fell, the brave little Gavroche, face downwards, never to rise again. "The great spirit of the little child left his body," Victor Hugo wrote and Kolya put it down into his book.

It grew dark. Kolya put away the book and sat quietly by the window. Katya had gone to see her friends. The village boys gathered beneath the window, shouting to Kolya to come out, but he wouldn't, giving his headache as an excuse. The girls were singing about beautiful July nights and the tall swaying rye.

Then he heard Misha Khrupov's voice telling the boys and girls something, and they all began to laugh. One of the girls struck up a song in a high teasing voice: "My darling's far away, and my heart's gone with him." Kolya felt certain that Misha had been speaking about him, giving away his secret. He closed the window, drew the curtain, lit the lamp and sat down to write a letter to Vitya Volk, in answer to one which had come the day before.

"At last I've received a letter from you. Vitya, why were you so long in writing? I know you had my address. We're so cut off here that any news is a treat. The little village where I'm staying is in the middle of fields, surrounded by forest. We are about fifteen miles from the nearest railway station. The scenery is quite picturesque. There are pines and other trees in the woods and there is a river about a mile away. The river banks are not very beautiful. Along the river, as everywhere in these parts, are low hillocks and mounds. The people here tell me that an archeological expedition was in these parts and made some interesting discoveries. Some of the mounds turned out

to be Mongol funeral barrows. So there's that to be said for the place. A family from Leningrad are spending their summer holidays here, too.

"As for sketching, I've not been in good form lately. I'm getting rather bored with everything. I've drawn and painted all the good places over and over again. The old man in the house where we are staying is quite a character. I mean to do his portrait. Then there are very interesting types among the people here. Particularly the children. You'd think they had stepped right out of Turgenev's stories (Fedyushas and Pavlushas). On the whole there are plenty of subjects for painting . . ."

Kolya paused, wondering if he had not exaggerated the pleasures of life here. Vitya might think he had nothing to do but enjoy himself. He dipped his pen in the ink and went on writing.

"But, somehow, though this is a wonderful place to be working in, I'm a little listless. Most of my time I devote to landscape painting."

Here Kolya warmed up to his subject, forgetting that he wished to write in a restrained tone, and began piling up the words at a furious rate.

"The sky is all important. To get the sky right is most essential in landscape painting. It must be painted very carefully, the colours must be pure and transparent. Only then will your landscape come alive.

"Lately I keep thinking of F. Vasilyev.

"I've practically stopped using smooth Whatman paper for water-colours, and have gone over to thin, rough-surfaced paper. It allows one to make washes, so that the colour comes clear and transparent. Practice has taught me how important



Lion at Zoo

the choice of paper is in painting. Strange as it may seem, I have done far fewer pencil drawings than water-colours. I'm quite upset about this. I'm drawn to colour.

"I want so much to know how you're getting on with your work. You've hardly written to me at all, you know. Only a postcard. Reading gives me a good deal of pleasure.

"Do write more often and longer letters—I'm dying of boredom here.

"Kolya."

There was a hint of autumn in the air, the August vistas stretched crystal-clear. Kolya sketched a ryefield on a slope. On windy days, the ripening rye kept up an incessant rustling, which sounded in one's ears all day. He started painting the corn when it had been gathered into ricks. Soon he had a whole set of water-colours, showing the fields before a shower, the river and bushes meekly waiting for the impending storm, the smooth surface of the meadows, just touched with the silver threads of the rain, water-filled valleys, trees with their heavy humid foliage.

Here, as never before, the tender, simple charm of Russian nature was revealed to him, as it lay, spacious and confiding, beneath the broad sky, with rounded white wafers of clouds slowly drifting across it.

Yet his only wish now was to be back home, in Moscow, in the yard in Plotnikov Street, which was so near the grounds of the Institute for the Deaf.

The longer nights depressed him; dusk was stealing part of the daylight.

It would not be long till he was home: Aunt Tanya was to

come at the beginning of August to take Kolya and Katya home. A few days before he was to leave, Kolya was sketching on the banks of the Mologa when Misha tracked him down there. He told Kolya he had found a hawk's nest and some beautiful places in the big forest beyond Repinka. There were deep gullies, he said, half-concealed by fallen trees with scraggy branches. They decided to go to the forest the next day, starting as early as possible, so as to see the sunrise. Kolya had not given up the idea of painting a large picture with figures going out to meet the early dawn—the picture he had described to Kira on that memorable evening in June.

On their way back, just as they reached the village, Kolya caught sight of a crowd of people outside the Razumeyevs' house. At first, thinking there might be a fire or some other accident, he rushed towards the house, but as he got nearer he saw there was no need for alarm. People were standing round the open window where he could make out Nyusha holding up some sheets of paper. He pushed his way through the crowd, elbowing between two village women—and then stopped dead. Nyusha was showing his pictures at the open window. His water-colour sketches lay on the window-sill, the table and the bench beside the wicket-gate. A subdued enthusiastic murmur ran through the crowd.

“Oh, how wonderful. Just think of it!”

“Look, it's our Mologa! Just like it really is!”

“Here, we've been living in the place all our lives and never noticed how beautiful it is!”

“Prokhor Yevseyevich! Hi, there, Chairman! Look how crooked that shed is! We kept on telling you it needed repairing. And now they'll be seeing in Moscow the kind of sheds we've got in Repinka collective farm.”

"And there's old Yefim! It's him to the life! See the way he's looking at us! The old man's still going strong!"

"Isn't that your plot, Stepanida? And the fence tumbling down. He hasn't missed anything, has he?"

"And there's Vasya, the cowherd, a regular hero he looks!"

At first nobody paid the slightest attention to Kolya, for all eyes were on the pictures, which were passed from hand to hand and returned to the window. Kolya leaped on to a bench, flushed and bewildered.

"Nyusha! How could you? Give me back my pictures, please. Why did you do it?"

And he gathered up his pictures from the people, who were hurt and protested kindly.

"D'you think we'll bring you bad luck? Or d'you think we're too ignorant to understand?"

"We're not so ignorant that we can't appreciate beautiful things!"

"You shouldn't be too proud, Kolya!"

How was he to explain that it was not because he was proud, but because he was profoundly embarrassed, because he was not at all sure that he had accomplished anything really good, anything worth showing people, that he was taking back his drawings and putting them away in the folder. Piling them up hastily and stuffing them away, he ran into the yard.

"He isn't proud," Nyusha explained. "He's just very shy. He hates to show off. You'd better go your way, neighbours, or I'll catch it from him."

Just then old Yefim came home.

"Enough of your talk," he said. "What will all your gabbing lead to? You know he's a quiet chap and hates a fuss, so why show him off?"

"Kolya, I'm so sorry," Nyusha said, "please don't be angry with me."

Kolya was silent.

But when everyone had gone to bed, and he had made certain that Katya was fast asleep, Kolya got out of bed, fetched the folders with his drawings and water-colours, made himself comfortable on the floor and began to examine them by the light of his electric torch. That day, without his being a party to it, there had been a sort of first public exhibition of his work. His pictures had gone to the hearts of the simple village people who had shown their appreciation of them. And after all there were one or two pictures he need not be ashamed to show to people in Moscow, he thought as he went over them again. He had done quite a bit—about a hundred and fifty water-colours, drawings and sketches in a little over two months. Kolya felt a surge of pride. Whatever people might say of him, there could be no denying that he was a hard worker: his summer's work was proof of it. Dad and Mum, he knew, would be pleased. Then he wondered what Antonina Petrovna would say, and what Vitya would think of his work. Oh, and there was so much more he wanted to do and that he would do!

The great flow of energy coursing through his veins made him feel happy. He squared his shoulders, stretching luxuriously till the muscles cracked, and then put all his pictures neatly back into the folders. He did not feel like sleeping. He opened the window quietly and threw back the shutters to let the cool fragrant breeze from the meadows and pinewoods steal into the room.

Kolya stood at the open window, eagerly drinking in the faint ever-changing perfumes, now so familiar to him.

The quiet of the night spread for miles upon miles over the

countryside which now lay slumbering after a day of honest toil. His native land: it breathed softly, mysteriously in Kolya's face, like a mother bending over her son, wishing him a silent good night.

Kolya suddenly felt a sweet irrepressible flow of gratitude. He thought of all the wonderful people who had taken such pains to teach him to understand things, helped him to develop a precise and flawless eye, sowed kindness in his soul, revealed to him life's harmonious beauty and with patient care turned the little palpitating lump in his breast into a big human heart, whose broad measured beat he could hear now, throbbing with the warm joy that coursed through his being welling with strength.

How grateful he was to those people! And how much more he must accomplish to repay their efforts and live up to their expectations!

Misha Khrupov had to knock three times on the shutter before Kolya woke. Noiselessly he dropped down from the window.

It was already getting light. They went, as they had agreed the day before, towards the gullies in the woods. Misha had a shot-gun with him, having induced the owner of the house where he was living to let him have it. "We might do some hunting, shoot a bit," he said.

Kolya was upset—his father, when they took leave of each other, had strictly forbidden him to play with guns.

"And do you have to get your Dad's permission to breathe?" Misha jeered.

As they came to the outskirts of the village and set off for

the forest, Kolya stopped for a moment beside the smithy and looked out over the fields.

The horizon blazed like the footlights on a stage. Against the pink-gold rim of the sky the two black sails of a distant windmill, half-concealed behind a slope, were raised like the hands of the conductor of an orchestra.

In the west the last star was slowly fading—how like the lights in a theatre before the curtain rose.

Stillness reigned over the whole vast world. The birds stopped singing. All was silent.

The grand moment was drawing near.

In a minute the orchestra would strike up, and after it the day—full, sunny, infinite—would burst forth in all its power.

The day—it had only just begun . . .

Moscow


1950—1952

EPILOGUE





EPILOGUE

ne of the principal art salons in Moscow in the winter of 1951 was featuring an "Exhibition of the work of Kolya Dmitriev, a pupil of the Moscow Art School." Some time ago the pictures had made the rounds of many of Moscow's art salons, everywhere drawing enthusiastic crowds. Later the exhibition was moved to Leningrad where it remained for quite a long time. And now it was back in the capital.

A large group of Young Pioneers from the outlying districts of Moscow visited the exhibition one Sunday. With them was a short, broad-shouldered man, far from young, with a small old-fashioned beard. He wore breeches and thick woollen stockings—the kind worn by tourists—and from the pockets of his loose velvet blouse protruded pencils and the gleaming metal rim of a magnifying glass. The man was Professor Gaiburov.

The professor led his charges up to the massive white door of the salon. He flung out his hands in a broad gesture and then brought them together again, as if gathering the children more closely round him.

"My dear friends," he began, and a hush came over the audience. "We have come here to see the pictures of Kolya

Dmitriev, one of our country's extremely gifted young artists. Before opening the door of the salon I wish to say a few words to you about him."

The professor bowed his heavy round head, and then raised it again abruptly restraining his emotion. Looking over the heads of his youthful listeners, he continued:

"Three years ago, when I was on a scientific expedition a long way from home, a number of Moscow Pioneers, young friends of mine, sent me a letter from which I learned of the unfortunate accident which was the cause of Kolya Dmitriev's death. It appeared that on the 12th of August, 1948, he went hunting with a friend in the forest of Repinka. The friend, carrying a loaded gun, slipped on some wet leaves and almost fell into a steep gully. Kolya went to help him and in the scramble to save the other boy the gun was accidentally discharged into Kolya's temple. He fell, face downwards, without a sound."

The Pioneers listened in solemn silence, and after a pause Professor Gaiburov continued: "When the work he had done in Repinka was brought to Moscow, the thing that surprised everyone was the great quantity of it. It was hard to believe that a boy could have done so much in only two months. Almost a hundred and fifty drawings, water-colours and sketches. And what pictures they were! He had worked entirely on his own, with no one to advise or correct him—yet there was marked maturity and a rare mastery in his pictures. Even those familiar with Kolya's previous work were astounded, realizing what great strides Kolya had made in this short period."

The professor opened a leather brief-case which he had been holding under his arm.

"Let me tell you what some of our finest painters and art

critics write about Kolya. They are all amazed that at the age of fifteen he could have produced such accomplished pictures. But they are even more amazed to find his work steeped in the best traditions of our rich Russian art, ancient and modern. And mind you"—Professor Gaiburov suddenly broke off and shut the case—"what you are now going to see is merely part of his work as a student. He had never meant his pictures to be exhibited—nothing could have been further from his thoughts. He was preparing to travel the long and arduous road of the art student and true artist. Great vistas lay before him. Far-seeing instructors guided him towards them, faithful comrades were at his side, and in every way he was encouraged to seek the beautiful, to see beauty in truth itself. He knew the value of friendship and was proud of belonging to the Young Pioneers. He was a real Pioneer, ready to blaze the trails that lead to a future of great beauty.

"He was a boy of remarkable will-power, industrious and determined in his work. Not long ago I reread Repin's reminiscences of Serov's boyhood and it made me feel that it was not Serov but Kolya I was reading about:

"He would become so forgetful of self while working that I sometimes forced him to stop and go out for a breath of air on the balcony in front of my big window.

"There were really two utterly different boys in one.

"When he went outdoors and began playing, he was a child. But in the studio he seemed ten years older than his age, his face grave, the lines of his pencil determined and bold. He grasped the essence of his subject and reproduced it with energetic strokes that had nothing childish about them. But what delighted me most was his ruthless way of altering finished details in his pictures because they seemed unsatisfactory. I

watched the development of a veritable Hercules of art. And what a great nature was his!' 'While Serov was still a child,' Repin says, 'he never missed a scene from real life that he thought could be painted.' That is so like Kolya! Look there—" The Professor turned suddenly to the great window. "There are the white walls of a multi-storey house rising high above Plotnikov Street! Kolya would have drawn it from his window over and over again—he would have rejoiced in every one of its twenty-six storeys! The new construction that is going on everywhere would have furnished a wealth of subjects to one who even in quiet Repinka could capture in the figures of the brave little cowherd boy and wise old Yefim the warm glow that is radiated by the work, the thoughts and achievements of the Soviet people as a whole!

"I knew Kolya Dmitriev very well," the professor continued, and there was such a note of grief in his voice that the boys and girls looked up at him with grave attention. "He was very modest and was convinced that he had not done anything worth-while yet. He particularly envied those of his friends who were doing something really useful for the good of the people. He would not believe there was anything noble about his own accomplishment. He carried on an endless quest for beauty in life. Here again what Repin wrote about Serov is applicable to Kolya:

"'Deep in the soul of every Russian is the desire to perform heroic feats. In some this desire develops into a profound passion, devouring the individual, rising high above the mundane to the point of self-oblivion. It is not often expressed and does not call forth appreciation, for it is buried deep within the personality and may remain invisible. But its power is so great that it can move mountains. This power lay behind the country's

great victories, such as Borodino. It made men follow Minin, and it filled the heart of the venerable Kutuzov. And this power is to be found everywhere. Humble and plain, unobtrusive and shy, it is strong and resolute, inspired by lofty principles.'

"Increased a hundredfold this desire to perform heroic feats is inherent in the life of the people of our country today. It is the power which smashed Hitler's fascism, the power which now links the Volga and the Don and is watching over the peace of the world.

"And that is all I have to say to you in front of this door," concluded the professor. "Now, my young friends, let us go in and look at the pictures."

Moscow, August 12th, 1952

WORKS
of KOLYA DMITRIEV

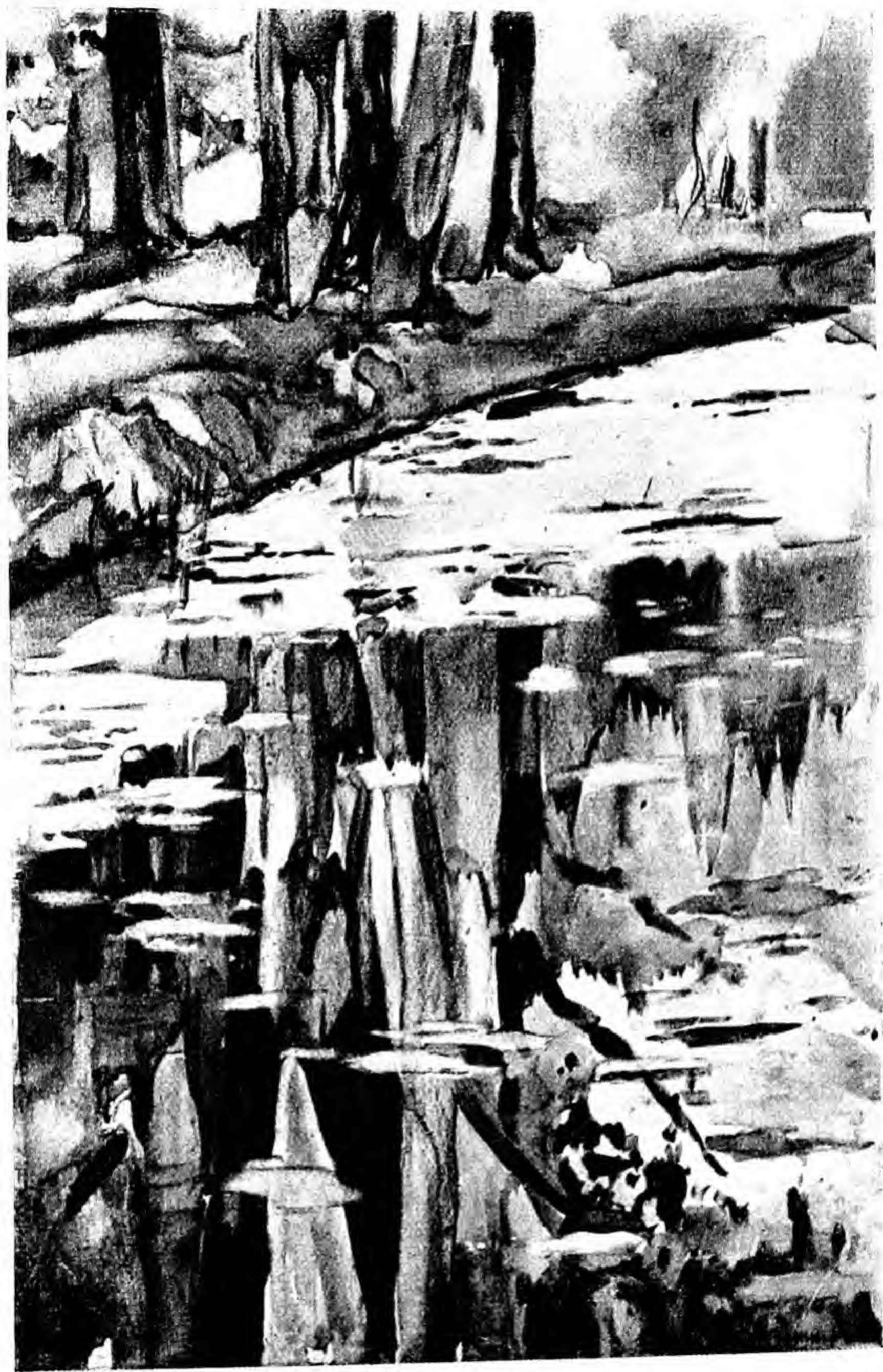
a pupil
of the Moscow Art School

1933 - 1948

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

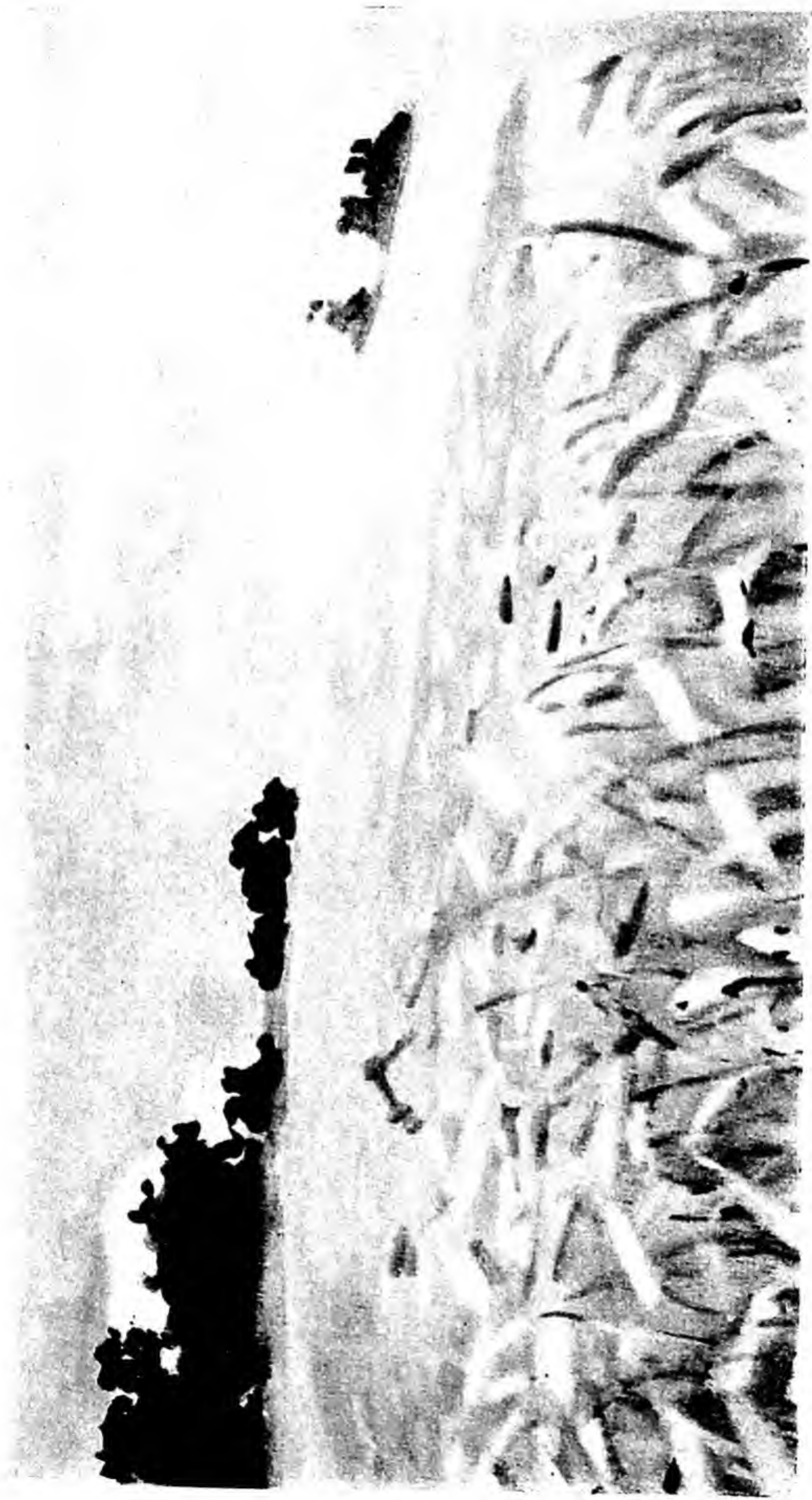
- I An Old Wall
- II Pond at Camp Near Podmolkovo
- III Salute
- IV A Barn by the Road
- V A Rye Field
- VI Early Morning in the Fields
- VII A Street in Spring
- VIII New Moscow
- IX "Overture"
- X A River View
- XI A Crossing
- XII A Street in Repinka
- XIII A Factory Yard
- XIV Cottage Interior
- XV Still Life
- XVI Before a Storm



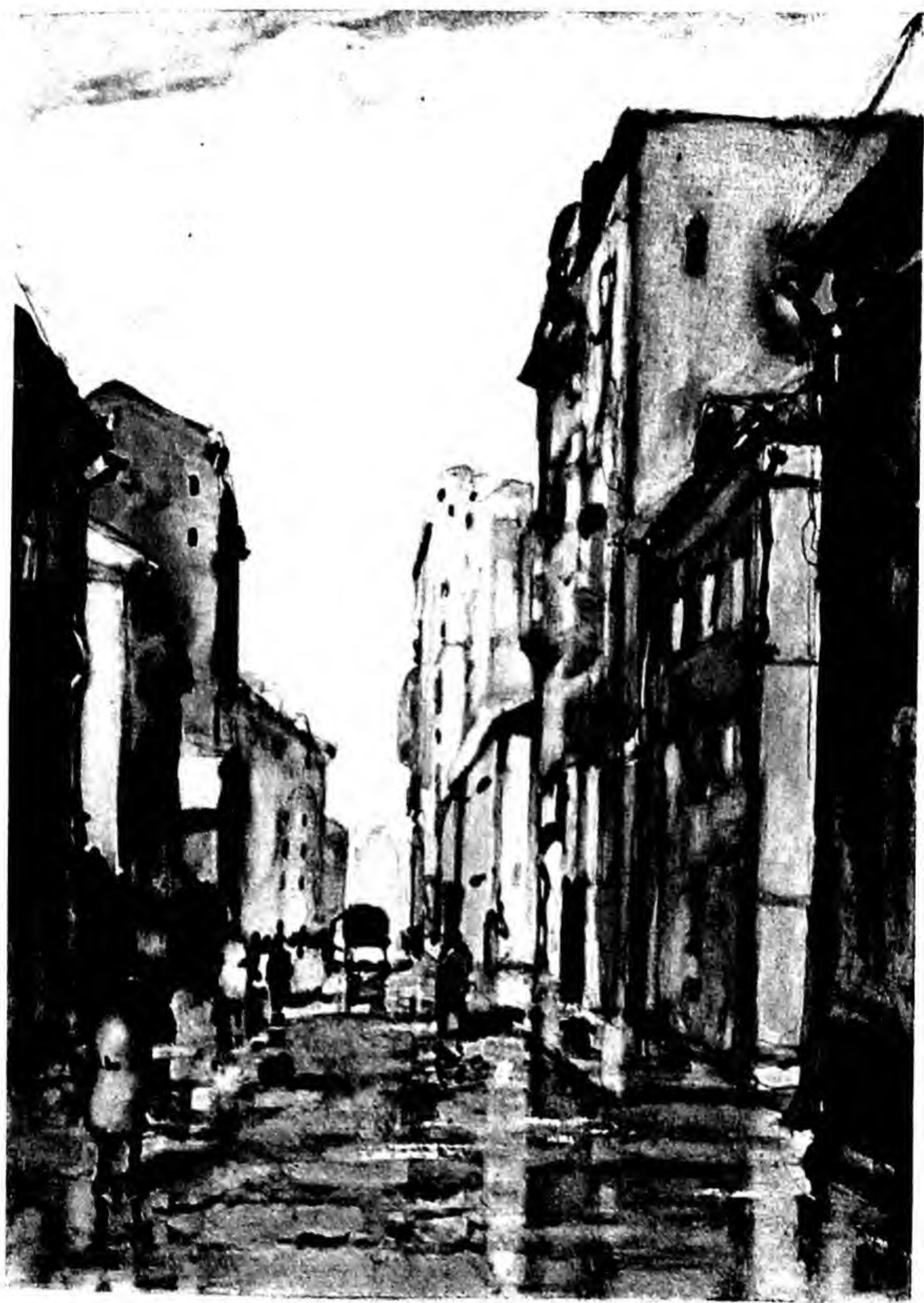


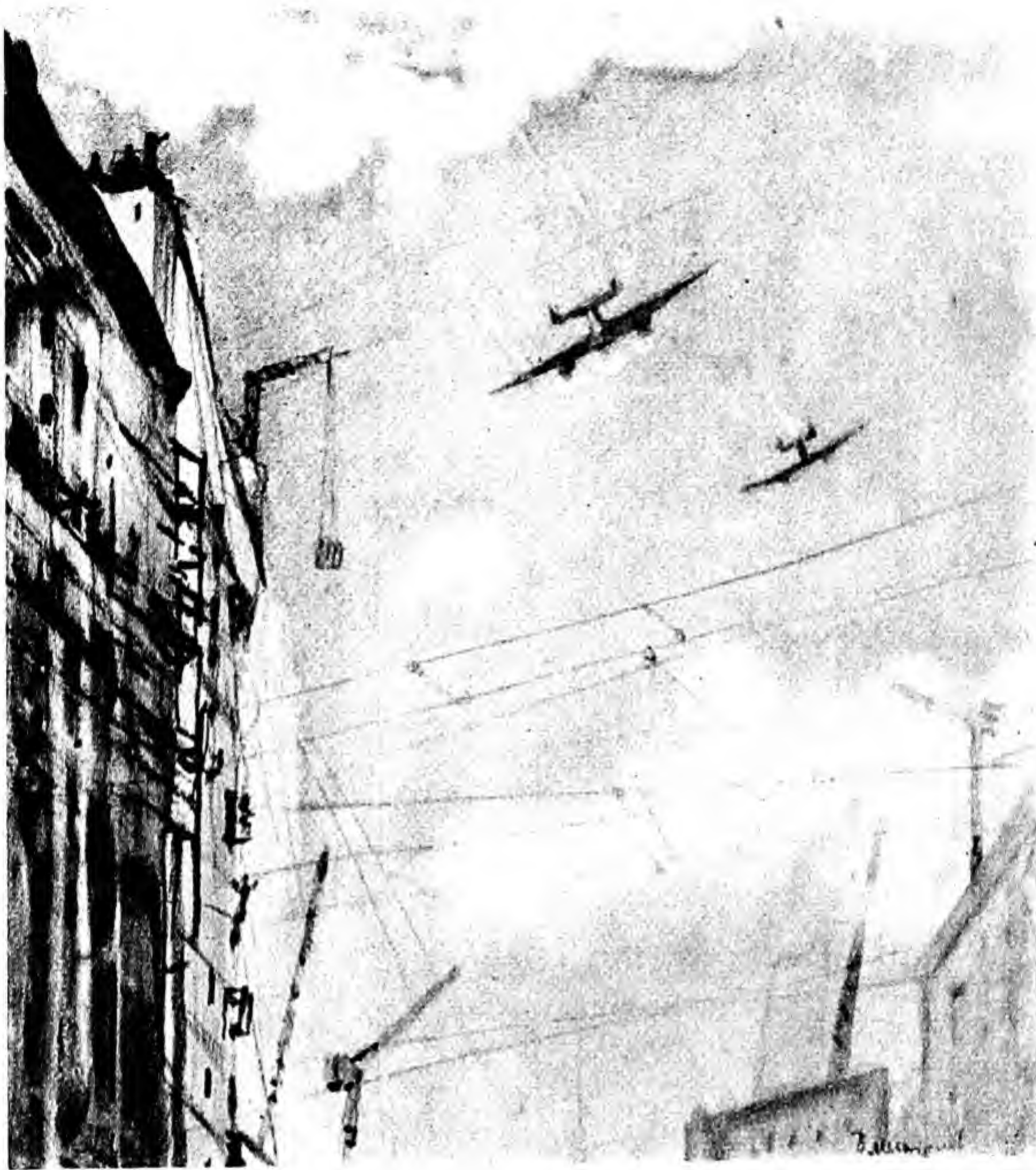


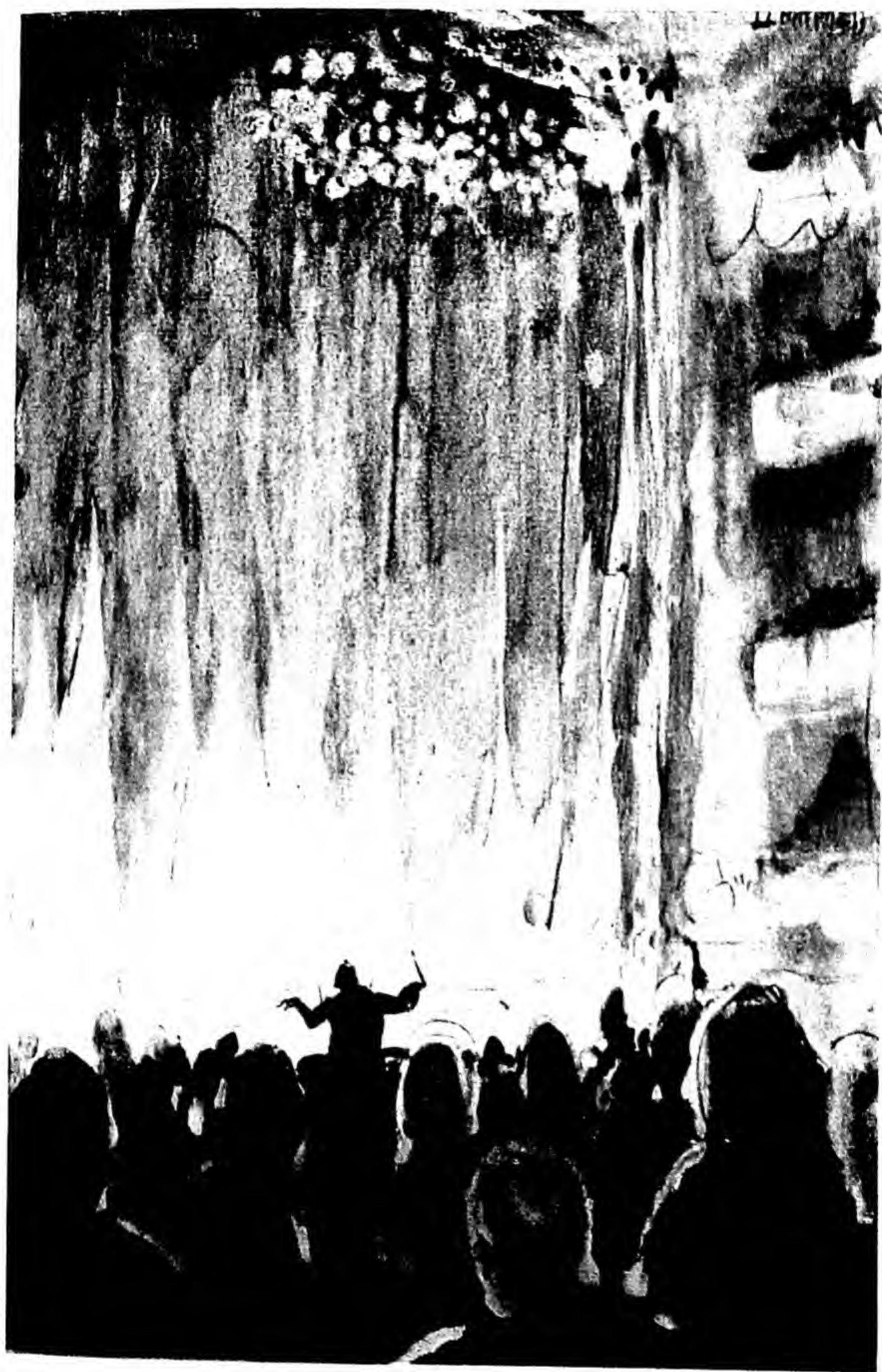


























ERRATA

	Reads	Should read
<i>p. 76, 8 line</i> from top	parent's work.	parents' work.
<i>p. 175, 5 line</i> from bottom	... uncle Volodya,	... Uncle Volodya,
<i>p. 176, 1 line</i> from bottom	He was as easy to talk ...	He was easy to talk ...
<i>p. 220, 2 line</i> from bottom	rest. He tought ...	rest. He thought ...
<i>p. 224, 8 line</i> from top	He would draw in it a school ...	He would draw in it at school ...
<i>p. 268, 5 line</i> from top	pad, but is was ...	pad, but it was ...
<i>p. 268, 14 line</i> from bottom	rimmed hat.	brimmed hat.
<i>p. 271, 14 line</i> from bottom	"You won't be offended if I tell you?" asked Kolya	Delete the line.
<i>p. 317, 7 line</i> from bottom	good afternon,	good afternoon,
<i>p. 318, 14 line</i> from bottom	... the bycicle frame,	... the bicycle frame.